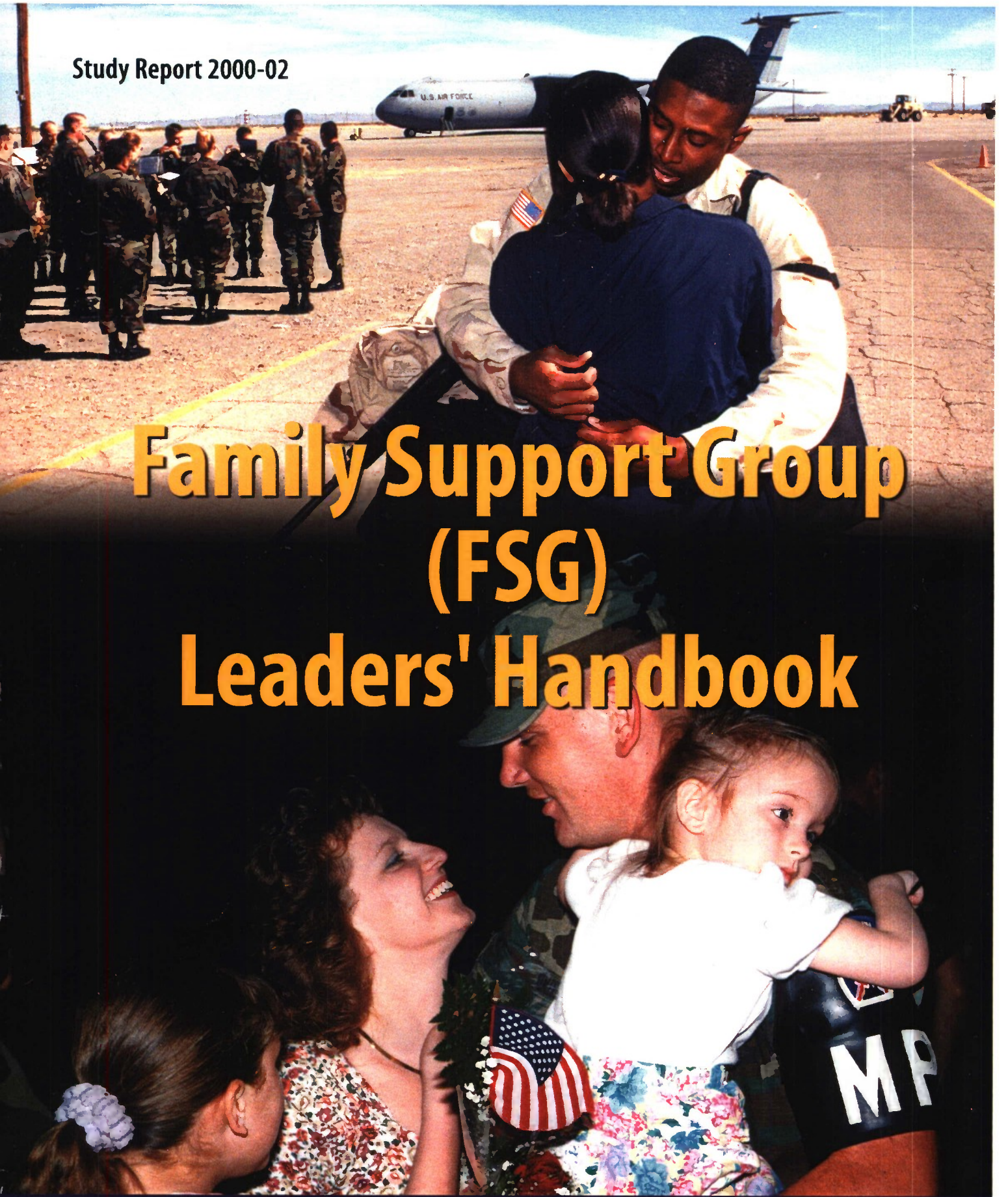
Study Report 2000-02



Family Support Group (FSG) Leaders' Handbook

U.S. Army Research Institute
for the Behavioral and Social Sciences

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The Family Support Group (FSG) Leaders' Handbook



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Study Report 2000-02
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Foreword

The Army has a continuing need to design and field a battalion-sized force which has enough armor to succeed against an entrenched enemy and yet is light enough to be rapidly inserted into any location where it is needed. During 1999, the U.S. Army Training and Doctrine Command (TRADOC) convened the Training, Leader, and Soldier Task Force (TLS-TF) to try to resolve the myriad of human dimension challenges associated with having a rapidly deploying, medium-weight force.

One of the chief needs that was recognized by the TLS-TF was for better mechanisms to support the families of such units. This manual begins to meet that need by bringing together the thinking of social science, family support professionals, and Army families on how to operate one of the Army's key support mechanisms for families: the unit-based volunteers that are collectively known as the Family Support Group (FSG).

This manual was funded by the TLS-TF and was produced by the U.S. Army Research Institute for the Behavioral and Social Sciences (ARI) under the general guidance of the TLS-TF and the U.S. Army Community and Family Support Center (USACFSC).

ZITA M. SIMUTIS
Technical Director

THE FAMILY SUPPORT GROUP (FSG) LEADERS' HANDBOOK

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Research Requirement:

The Training, Leadership, and Soldier Task Force (TLS-TF) was convened at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, throughout 1999 to help resolve the human issues in fielding a Medium (weight) Force that could be rapidly deployed to a variety of locations to fulfill Army missions. As part of that effort, the U. S. Army Research Institute (ARI) was asked to design materials that would help families in rapid deployment units.

Procedure:

A great deal has been written about FSG operations by researchers at ARI and at the Walter Reed Army Institute of Research (WRAIR). Volunteers who have operated FSGs, and professionals within Army family agencies, have recorded their experience in operating these or similar volunteer groups. Extensive non-research documentation has been provided by the U. S. Army Community and Family Support Center (USACFSC), the U. S. Army War College (AWC), the U. S. Army Europe and Seventh Army (USAREUR), and selected installations within the U. S. Army Forces Command (FORSCOM). These installations were (1) Fort Bragg, NC; (2) Fort Hood, TX; (3) Fort Campbell, KY; and (4) Fort Polk, LA.

This rather extensive literature (5 file boxes) was reviewed and classified by the two senior authors. (The list of documents that were actually used for this report appear in Appendix A.) Although expert judgment has been exercised in the selection and presentation of available materials, the ideas that emerged are only suggested courses of action. Individual FSGs are quite different from one another, and most of these ideas have not been subjected to rigorous evaluations. Specific topics covered include (1) what FSGs are expected to accomplish, (2) suggestions for starting (or re-energizing) an FSG, (3) relevant Army Regulations, and (4) sources of additional help in operating an FSG or for assisting FSG members.

Findings:

The modern FSG is part of a tradition of voluntary self-help that goes back to the American Revolution. FSGs are part of a larger system that helps families cope with the rigors of Army life. At a minimum, it is a system for rapidly transmitting information during deployments to those who consider themselves part of the "unit family." Other services often include a unit newsletter, unit handbook, sponsorship functions, and various types of meetings and social gatherings. FSGs also find themselves providing social and emotional support (particularly during times of deployments and trauma). Provision of direct, continuing support to individuals (e.g., childcare, transportation, or lending money) does occur but is not recommended because it tends to slow the development of coping skills in individual families and to overburden FSG volunteers.

This manual is filled with suggestions for handling FSG functions such as: (1) operating the telephone circle/tree, (2) producing and distributing a newsletter, (3) helping in times of trauma, (4) recruiting and retaining volunteers, and (5) structuring the FSG. It also contains an extensive list of additional resource materials, noting where they can be obtained.

Utilization of Findings:

Earlier drafts of the report were shared with key individuals responsible for family support operations within the USACFSC and the TLS-TF. Both agencies have indicated that this handbook fills a real gap in the current family support system. Comments were also solicited from individuals who were potential users of this handbook (e.g., Army Community Service staff at Fort Polk, Louisiana, and senior spouses at the Army War College). Although the reviewers suggested modifications, they liked the handbook and looked forward to having it as a resource.

The Family Support Group (FSG) Leaders' Handbook

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The Family Support Group (FSG)[1] Leaders' Handbook

Section I: Introduction

This manual is designed to help the new Family Support Group (FSG) leader by answering some fundamental questions. Each section that follows addresses one of these questions:

- What is an FSG?
- How is the FSG connected to the unit?
- What should an FSG try to accomplish?
- How do I get an FSG going?
- What must I avoid to stay out of trouble with Army Regulations?
- What are other sources of help for FSG leaders and members?

The handbook is specifically designed for rapid deployment units. The first 29 pages provide general information of interest to all FSG leaders. Most of the appendices that follow offer specific information on certain tasks that are commonly encountered in operating FSGs. These are:

- Locating appropriate training and other resource materials (Appendix B)
- Making meetings and fund-raisers more fun and successful (Appendix C)
- Participating in soldier and family sponsorship programs (Appendix D)
- Producing and distributing FSG newsletters (Appendix E)
- Helping unit members and their families cope with trauma (Appendix F)
- Starting/re-energizing FSGs (Appendix G)

Three other appendices offer reference material:

- Appendix A lists the sources we used in writing this document
- Appendix H provides a glossary of acronyms used in this handbook
- Appendix I is an index of key words and phrases, to help you locate the information you desire.

The handbook contains the most up-to-date information we could find in nearly 20 years of research conducted by the U. S. Army Research Institute (ARI) and the Walter Reed Army Institute of Research (WRAIR) on family support during deployments. It incorporates the latest materials available from the U. S. Army Community and Family Support Center (USACFSC), the Army War College (AWC), the U. S. Army Europe (USAREUR), and installations with frequently deploying units within the U. S. Army Forces Command (FORSCOM), specifically, Forts Bragg, Campbell, Hood, and Polk. The materials are current as of the fall of 1999.

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[1] Last fall, the Chief of Staff of the U. S. Army, General Shinseki, asked the U. S. Army War College to examine the following question: "Would a change in the name 'Family Support Group' to 'Family Readiness Group' help to foster a self reliant perception?" Since that question was raised, there has been a movement to change the name. Although this change may well take place, it has not yet been formally approved. Therefore, we have chosen to stay with the more widely known (and legally sanctioned) designation for these voluntary organizations: Family Support Group or FSG.

Although there are some laws and Army Regulations that forbid certain activities (see Section VI for examples), the Army is not going to tell you how to do this job. You are a volunteer. The ideas presented are a collection of what has worked for others. Use them if they sound like they will help you.

Section II: What is a Family Support Group (FSG)?

A. History of FSGs

The basic idea behind an FSG is that soldiers and families benefit from helping one another cope with the rigors of Army life, particularly the strains of frequently relocating, having to keep families going while the soldiers are deployed, and the crises of life (e.g., injury or death of a partner, divorce, and injury or death of a child).

During the Revolutionary War, the mutual help was quite obvious. Family members functioned as support troops by cooking, mending, nursing, and carrying the wartime equipment in exchange for getting half-rations for each adult and quarter-rations for each child. Soldiers and family members helping one another were also evident in the frontier Army, where the families and soldiers shared the hardships of establishing and maintaining Army communities as isolated posts in the middle of an often-hostile environment. There is a rather touching story of Mrs. Custer, who, after the defeat at Little Big Horn, went from one unit wife to another (each now a widow), offering what comfort she could, even though she had just lost her own husband and, because of the policies then in effect, was no longer eligible for any Army benefits to help her restart her life.

During World War II, spouses tried to follow their soldiers as often as they could and to remain close at hand. However, when that was not possible, they formed "waiting wives clubs" to provide mutual support and assistance to one another, usually back in the community where the family had its roots. The modern FSG (i.e., a volunteer, unit-based group that provides mutual support) could be seen in the early 1980s at Fort Bragg, North Carolina, in a unit that was being sent to the Sinai Desert as peacekeepers.[2] The focus of this FSG was on the well-being of unit wives – the unit was all-male – who remained at Fort Bragg. However, researchers who were studying the unit noted that many of the younger spouses had "gone home" and, therefore, did not benefit from the social and support activities that the FSG provided for those who remained. Moreover, there appeared to be no support offered to individuals other than spouses (e.g., girlfriends or parents of single soldiers), who also were experiencing separation.

B. Definition of an FSG

Today the Army defines an FSG as a company-level or battalion-level organization of officers, enlisted soldiers, civilians, and family members who volunteer to provide mutual social and emotional support, outreach services, and information to their fellow soldiers and family members (i.e., those who belong to the unit, have a significant relationship with a soldier in the unit, or the FSG chooses to "adopt"). In other words, there is a spirit of inclusion here that does not stop with just the spouses of unit soldiers. FSGs welcome those who have an interest in the unit (e.g., civilian employees, retirees,

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[2] Although we are not sure that this unit was the first unit with an FSG, it is certainly a well documented story. For details on what the unit did to help its families and the problems they encountered, see Appendix A, particularly: Segal & Segal (1993) and Van Vranken, et al. (1984).

soldiers' parents, and boyfriends and girlfriends of single soldiers), need its services, and/or are willing to help the FSG meet its goals.[3] The term we will use to describe the whole collection of individuals eligible to belong to the FSG will be "the unit family."

The Army recognizes that helping families is its moral obligation and in its best interest.[4] Families that can cope with (and in many instances actually enjoy) Army life are more likely to contribute to the community, allow their soldiers to do their Army jobs well, and encourage their soldiers to remain in service. The best help for families is frequently that given by peers as they, together, learn how to handle various aspects of Army life. Hence, the Army mandates that each unit commander establish and support an FSG. To help FSGs grow and prosper, the Army provides training and materials, such as this handbook (see Appendix B for a list of additional materials and where to get them). Note, however, that the FSG is not the only resource for helping families. As we will see in Section VII, FSGs are part of a larger Army effort to help families adapt to the challenges of Army life.

C. What an FSG is not

Years of research and personal experience with Family Support Groups show that FSGs are most effective when they are run in a non-hierarchical manner. Conversely, they are destined to fail if they merely mirror the chain of command and serve as another top-down communication mechanism. FSGs are successful when soldiers (at all rank levels) and their family members feel supported and valued. Experience shows that this objective is achieved when each FSG leadership position is filled by the "best person for the job" rather than on the basis of seniority or rank of the FSG member's spouse. Rank should not be a consideration in who fills offices nor in who feels welcome.

Some families, particularly those who are new to the Army, get the mistaken idea that the FSG is some form of psychological or psychiatric group therapy. Because they do not consider themselves to be mentally ill, they feel that they should not be a part of such a group. It is important to communicate with families in such a way that they get a clearer idea of what FSGs really are. The kind of help that FSGs provide is the kind of help that we all need and try to get every day: good information to help us plan, an opportunity to make friends, help with Army bureaucracy (if needed), and a chance to have some fun and talk through what may be on our minds. Good information and friends who provide each other needed emotional support and shared labor to meet daily tasks can and should be what FSGs are all about. And these are the very things that Army spouses need to cope successfully with all of the phases of Army life. This manual is about sharing "lessons learned" in operating FSGs so that they can achieve these objectives.

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[3] A difference exists between FSGs and social clubs. Some units have social or philanthropic groups that are loosely associated with the unit. Support groups for military spouses are also available via the Internet. However, unless such groups are under the control of a unit's commanding officer and are designed to assist families, they are not considered "official" FSGs.

[4] For a discussion of how families affect the Army and career intent of soldiers, see Segal & Harris, 1996.

Section III: How is the FSG connected to the unit?

A. The FSG is a command program.

Unit commanders are required to support an FSG. Research has repeatedly shown that to be successful, commanders must be seen as technically competent and caring towards their people (i.e., the unit members and their families). If commanders give an FSG their time, attention, and the resources it needs, it will succeed. It may succeed in the absence of command attention, but it will be much harder to get the job done, and unit members will quickly learn that the commander's words do not match his/her actions. Command support means that the commander not only says that families and the FSG are important but also demonstrates their importance by attending FSG functions, meeting with the FSG leadership to help plan what the FSG will do, devising incentives to encourage members and families to attend FSG functions (e.g., offering free childcare during FSG meetings), and making sure the unit staff works with the FSG to achieve their common goals.[5]

B. FSGs and rapid deployment units.

A fully functioning and effective FSG is especially important for rapid deployment units because the families in those units experience more frequent family separations. Prior to any deployment, the commander should organize a meeting at which s/he speaks to the unit and families about the mission they are about to conduct.[6] The commander needs to tell them as openly as possible where they are going, how long they will be gone, how the soldiers can be contacted, and the extent of danger that is involved. If possible, the commander should also arrange time and space for all families to get to know each other in an informal setting prior to the command briefings. Again, the family-to-family ties will help sustain families during the soldiers' absences.

By setting policies and enforcing Army Regulations, the commander should attempt to ensure that all soldiers have their affairs in order, that their personal possessions are secure, and that they are aware of the many services the Army offers to help families cope.[7] Within the constraints of the mission, the commander will need to provide "time off" for the personnel who are about to deploy to take care of personal and family matters (e.g., arrange back-up childcare, take care of family pets, and help their spouses become more familiar with the resources they will need to operate in the soldier's absence).

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[5] The commander can help the FSG by encouraging soldiers to volunteer to help at FSG functions, providing equipment to get out the FSG newsletters, writing a column in the FSG newsletter, and formulating clear "pro-family" policies. However, the commander should not attempt to run the FSG. The energy to propel and sustain it must come from the FSG and its leaders.

[6] Others who are normally at this meeting are representatives from the FSG and key post-level human service programs such as Army Community Service (ACS), Chaplains, and the Judge Advocate General's (JAG) office, who explain how their agencies can help soldiers and members of the unit family.

[7] Having the key support people present (i.e., the RD commander, FSG leader, unit Chaplain, and a representative from the post ACS) so that the families can see and meet them increases the probability that the families will actually use the services they need.

The commander also needs to appoint a competent, caring, and mature officer to head the Rear Detachment (RD) – someone willing and able to deal with family issues. It helps if the RD commander is relatively senior in rank so that s/he can cut through "red tape" to resolve problems and if s/he is easy to work with and is respected by the FSG members.[8] The RD commander needs advance notice and the required training to fulfill this important function.[9]

The commander must keep an open line of communication back to the RD (and, if possible, the FSG) to ensure that those who care about the unit's soldiers have the latest (public) information possible. The commander must accept that those who are not deployed are still part of his/her responsibility and that the RD, FSG, and forward command must work as a team to keep the group informed and able to communicate with their soldiers. Decisions regarding how and what to communicate and how this team is going to resolve issues will be much easier if the team has close pre-existing relationships and well-established procedures. The primary source of such relationships and procedures is the FSG.

[8] A survey of Gulf War-era FSG leaders found that most leaders felt that the RD commanders they worked with: (1) were well qualified, (2) maintained a positive relationship with them, and (3) were helpful. For more details, see Bell, Stevens, & Segal (1996, page 16).

[9] Research has consistently shown the importance of having a Rear Detachment (RD) that can successfully deal with family difficulties. For example, 74% of Europe-based spouses during the initial phases of our Bosnia peacekeeping deployment in 1996 said that they had used the services of the RD. Eighty percent of those who used the RD found them to be at least "somewhat" helpful. RD soldiers were more likely to say that they were able to help unit families if they had been specially trained and designated for that function.

During the Gulf War (1990-1991), when RDs were neither specially selected nor trained, relatively few spouses reported that their RD emphasized the importance of FSGs (52%), provided adequate information to families (46%), made families feel comfortable coming for help (45%), or was good at controlling rumors (36%). For additional information about the working relations between RDs and FSGs during the Gulf War, see Bell, Stevens, & Segal (1996, page 16).

Section IV: What should an FSG try to accomplish?

As is elaborated on the following pages, fully functioning FSGs may provide the following services: convening meetings, welcoming new soldiers and families, staffing telephone trees/circles, establishing other forms of communication among unit families, maintaining rosters, and providing support to individual families.

A. Meetings.

There are essentially three types of meeting that can be sponsored by the FSG. They are social, welcome home, and informational meetings. Each of these is discussed below along with general guidelines for holding meetings. Additional ideas for making meetings more successful can be found in Appendix C.

1. Social meetings. Both relocations and family separations are much easier to tolerate if the family has developed a social support network.[10] Unit socials and FSG events allow participants to establish and strengthen their social networks while they have fun. Unit socials tend to occur when the unit is in garrison. FSG functions (that benefit from RD help) tend to occur during deployments. (A list of battalion and FSG activities can be found in Table 4 of Appendix C. Suggestions on how to pay for these events and what assistance is available from the Army are described in Section VII and Appendix C.)

If you anticipate that new members will be attending a social meeting, you should provide name tags and have at least one activity that encourages people to get to know each other. Individuals should be addressed by their first names and without the rank of their soldiers. Everyone should be shown equal respect. Whenever practical, you should include the RD, parents, and anyone else who is in the "unit family."

FSGs simply cannot ignore the importance of childcare during FSG meetings. Attendance can be improved by holding a meeting that is centered on the children or one where free childcare is provided by the FSG in a safe, approved place that is out of earshot of the main meeting.[11] Many spouses also enjoy adult-centered meetings where they can get a break away from the frequent demands of small children. (Remember that the typical Army family consists of two adults and two children who are under the age of six.)

2. Welcome home parties. A special type of meeting is the kind that welcomes soldiers home from a deployment. This type of event can be hard to arrange because the

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[10] One of the consequences of frequent relocations is that Army families have to make friends quickly. Friends are people you can talk to, have fun with, and share the tasks of everyday life. Social support networks consist not only of friends, but also one's relatives and social support professionals (e.g., clergy, counselors, and lawyers) who may be needed in some situations. When Army families need help, they are much more likely to turn to friends and family than to any professional or helping agency.

[11] There are various ways to pay for the childcare. Some FSGs take it out of their general operating funds; others arrange trade-offs (e.g., the FSG for one unit provides childcare for the meetings of another unit and then is paid back "in kind" when it is time for them to meet).

unit does not ordinarily control the transportation home. Flights can be delayed, and the unit can be split between planes. The RD and the FSG need to keep track of the changes and communicate them to those who will be waiting for the soldiers. There is nothing worse than having a young spouse waiting for his/her soldier, who – for whatever reason – does not arrive on the expected flight.

Welcomes should be enthusiastic with banners, posters, baked goods, sandwiches, drinks, etc. The reception should be long enough to convey an adequate welcome but short enough that soldiers don't feel they are being kept from their families and from going home. Sometimes it makes more sense to invite dignitaries for a second event that is days or weeks after the first welcome event. Be sure to think about transportation for everyone from the welcome site to the unit and barracks. Also, you will often find that local merchants are willing to donate food items or other gifts to help make the welcome event possible or more enjoyable.

The time immediately following a reunion of soldiers with their families can be a stressful period. To help the families prepare for this experience, consider including a reunion briefing as part of the preparations for a welcome home party. Chaplains or Army Community Service (ACS) representatives typically present the reunion briefings, film presentation, or discussion.[12] Having the unit schedule a similar briefing for the returning soldiers, while they are still deployed, can also be quite helpful.

3. Informational meetings. This type of meeting is common during deployments. Some of the most popular are those that provide direct information from the command group about what is happening during the deployment via a video or audio conference. Other informational meetings center around deployment topics and are often most beneficial prior to a deployment (e.g., a speaker who tells how to cope with deployments, a panel of agency representatives who tell how their agency helps, or someone from post headquarters who tells more about the mission).[13] Some FSGs also hold informational meetings that focus on one or more techniques for coping with Army life (e.g., how to obtain military benefits or get a job in the local economy). Although these topics need to be taught, they are notoriously hard to teach in an FSG setting because the people who are most in need of the information (e.g., spouses of junior

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[12] FSGs can also organize their own reunion discussion with or without the Operation READY film, using either the U. S. Army Community and Family Support (1994) reunion manual or the 1990 manual on this same topic that is published by the Office of the Chief of Chaplains. For more information on these resources, see Appendices A and B.

[13] If you invite a panel of speakers, urge them to discuss what they can do during deployments rather than everything the agency does. That will make it easier for the families to remember what they need to know. Also, ask them to coordinate what they are going to say so that, if possible, the families get a single message about what they need to do. Finally, ask them to be brief (cut the jokes and personal qualifications statements) so that the families can get back to preparing for the deployment.

Most posts have this type of update or overall briefing on a fixed schedule and at a central location. However, they can often be talked into bringing the briefing to an FSG meeting if you ask for it.

enlisted soldiers) are often the ones who are least likely to attend FSG meetings regularly.[14]

Some FSGs combine social and informational meetings or business meetings. For example, following a potluck supper, they may have a speaker, a work session to get out the newsletter, or a meeting of the FSG's "leadership group" to formulate FSG procedures. The theory holds that you need the social event to get people to come so that you can give them the information they need or involve them in the work that must be done. Although some FSG leaders feel that this is a successful approach, others believe that the speakers turn people off and that they will not come back for the next social because they believe they will be "educated" or "employed" if they do. We do not know who is right on this one. You may wish to get some feedback from your unit families (particularly those who are already attending functions) about the kinds of activities they prefer. This can be done via informal conversations before the meeting, via a checklist that they complete while at the meeting, or via the FSG telephone contact system.

There is also some controversy about how predictable meetings should be. Some FSG materials stress that the meetings must be at the same day, time, and place every month so that the members can plan ahead to attend. Others say that the meetings should move around to meet the varying needs (and availability) of different segments of the unit family (e.g., an early morning meeting for young mothers who want to learn parenting skills or an evening meeting for spouses who have daytime employment). Again, we don't know who is right, and therefore you will need to get more feedback from your unit's families. However, we are sure that the attendance will vary a lot and that the causes of those shifts have more to do with the needs of the members than with what the FSG leadership is trying to accomplish. Meeting the needs of the members requires a multimedia approach. Some people just don't like meetings, and some cannot get to meetings even though they would like to attend. Also, remember that the FSG has a lot of symbolic value. The unit family wants to know that it exists (if they need it) even though they may not need what it is offering at the present time.[15]

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[14] Junior enlisted are more likely to attend FSG functions if the event is associated with a major deployment, is free or low cost, is a potluck rather than a coffee, and has free childcare and transportation. They are also more likely to attend if they know some other spouses (their peers) who will be there.

Additionally, there is a strong case for reaching these young spouses early. For example, in Europe, the ACS directors say that if they can contact young spouses during their first two weeks at the post, they are much more likely to come in for "orientation to Europe" classes than if they try to bring them in later.

Likewise, some FSG leaders believe that you must make contact with potential FSG members in person, going to where they live and meeting them on a face-to-face basis, telling them who you are and why they should be a part of the FSG. Again, it is easier to convince young families that you care about them if you see them shortly after they arrive rather than a year later. Despite the success of the Army Family Team Building (AFTB) program, there are still many FSG leaders who believe that the best way to teach these coping skills to young spouses is in a one-on-one setting via someone who is more a peer than a trained instructor.

[15] For example, one of the units we visited in our research experienced a great deal of frustration because one of their central events – a holiday dinner while the soldiers were deployed – was poorly attended. Yet in subsequent interviews with unit spouses, the researchers found that this event was seen as very important for these spouses even though they had not attended.

4. Meeting guidelines. There are some general guidelines that should be followed for all meetings. Although everyone is welcome and encouraged to attend, you cannot and should not mandate attendance at an FSG function. Invitations to meetings should state the time, place, and purpose of the meeting. Invitations should also address the availability and cost of childcare.

Most FSGs advertise their meetings in more than one medium. For instance, invitations can be issued in person, by phone, in newsletters, on unit or post bulletin boards, or by a separate letter (e.g., one written by the commander). Meeting planning also includes inviting experts, preparing handouts (if needed), and going early to insure that the physical arrangements are in order.

Certain rules should be covered at the start of each meeting. For instance, in the FSG all spouses are equal regardless of the military rank of their soldier. What is said during a meeting should be kept confidential (carrying this information out of the meeting will make people less open in discussing what is going on with them, and it may start rumors). If the meeting has an agenda, everyone should stay on track. Long monologues should be discouraged because they waste people's time and prevent others from sharing their thoughts and ideas. Everyone should respect the ideas of others, regardless of whether they agree.

Out of respect for others' time, all meetings should start and end at the announced time. Having a published agenda agreeable to the key people (e.g., the commander and the FSG leader) greatly enhances the chances of holding a short, productive meeting. Any FSG business that needs to be handled should be on the agenda. The discussion should be orderly and reflect the opinions of all who are present. The minutes of the decisions reached (and the target dates for their implementation) should be published, as soon as possible, in the FSG newsletter. The FSG leader should also be prepared to review with other key FSG volunteers how future meetings might be improved and how best to address any remaining unfinished business.

B. Welcoming new soldiers and families.

According to Army Regulations, all units are supposed to have a program in which new soldiers and their families are assigned experienced peers (and, where appropriate, peer families) to help orient them to the new installation and unit. In some units, new soldiers and families can expect to receive letters from their "sponsors" even before they leave their previous assignment. Such letters offer assistance in the form of showing the new soldier (and his/her family) around the post and the community, showing them areas where they may live, and offering to help them settle in. These programs make an impact on the soldiers. For example, soldiers who say that their sponsors were helpful to them are more likely to say that they are going to remain in the Army. Unfortunately, research shows that the soldiers who are most likely to need this service (i.e., married junior enlisted soldiers and their spouses) are the least likely to

receive it.[16] The program is also likely to break down during deployments. For example, during the early days of the Bosnia deployment, the United States Army in Europe stopped accepting new families because both the new soldiers and the units were too stressed with the demands of training and shipping personnel to take care of the new families properly.

Helping new families can and should be facilitated by the FSG. As a first step, FSG leaders should be given the names and telephone numbers of all new soldiers and their families as soon as possible. (Details about how the FSG can help the unit operate soldier and family sponsorship programs and materials to help you do it can be found in Appendix D.) Shortly after a family's arrival, an FSG leader should contact them to welcome them to the unit. The more personal contact there has been between FSG leaders and potential members, the more likely new members are to attend FSG functions. In addition to building FSG membership and alleviating newcomers' problems, welcoming and helping new families has another payoff. You know where they are and therefore how to contact them.[17]

C. Telephone trees or circles.

The two most common systems for rapid disbursement of family information during a deployment are "phone trees" and "phone circles." A phone tree is a system with levels that requires people at one level (e.g., the company) to call people at the next level (e.g., the platoon) who, in turn, contact individual families. A phone circle accomplishes the same task by having one person (the head of the phone circle) call all of the individuals (say 10 contact people) who will reach all of the FSG members.

The advantage of a phone tree is that each caller has relatively few individuals to call. Also, when all of the callers are in place, the message can move faster than it can in a phone circle. The disadvantage of a phone tree is that if there is a problem at the head of a branch, those who are further along on the branch may never receive the message. Furthermore, it is harder to control the uniformity of the message being communicated because it has to pass through many layers (i.e., from battalion, to company, to platoon, to FSG member). [Remember the old game of "telephone" that you played as a kid.] (See Table 1 for a list of reminders on making phone calls.)

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[16] In 1994, 63% of officers and 26% of enlisted personnel had participated (at some time in their career) in a sponsorship program during a Permanent Change of Station (PCS) move. The percent who participated in such a program ranged from 77% among field grade officers to 13% among junior enlisted personnel. Unfortunately, there is no detail in these figures as to which units these individuals were in or whether they were married. Among those who participated, officers (65%) were more likely than enlisted personnel (57%) to say that their sponsors were at least moderately helpful.

[17] New families typically move three times during their first year at a new installation. They move into the guest quarters, then to an apartment that is too far away and/or too expensive. Finally, they move into the place they will be for the rest of their stay – the place they would have chosen first had they known the area better. When this typical pattern is followed, the chances that either the unit or the FSG has the third address and telephone number are remote.

Table 1
Telephone Tips

1. Always identify yourself (first and last name) at the beginning of the call. During the first few calls, also indicate which unit FSG you represent.
2. Be pleasant when you call. Use a voice with a smile.
3. Be positive. Your enthusiasm (attitude) is contagious.
4. Try at least three times to reach a family if passing along a message.
5. Ask, as you begin a call, "Is this a convenient time to chat for a few minutes?" If yes, then go ahead. If no, ask when to call back and then hang up.
6. Never repeat gossip or rumors.
7. Speak distinctly into the mouthpiece. Don't eat, chew gum, or do noisy chores like washing dishes while on the phone.
8. Apologize if you get a wrong number.
9. To remedy the lack of face-to-face contact, make generous use of phrases such as "thank you," "please," "would you mind?" or "I'll be glad to."
10. Use the name of the person to whom you are speaking.
11. If you must end a lengthy call, be tactful.
12. Close calls definitely. Hang up after the other party does.
13. When placing a call, be ready to talk when the person answers.
14. Use active listening (listen between the lines and ask questions to verify that you are hearing the other person correctly).
15. Find out when the best time is to place calls to the person you are talking to. As a general rule, don't call after 9 PM or before 9 AM unless they request it.
16. Don't take it personally if someone you talk to is rude. Do not become rude in response to their behavior.
17. Try to answer questions as best you can. If you don't know the answer, say that; then tell them when you will get back to them with the best available answer.
18. Keep a phone log, noting who was called, when, and (if necessary) when to call back.
19. Don't think of the telephone as an intrusion. Consider it a terrifically convenient time-saver.

Phone trees/circles are normally active only during deployments. However, some units use them to "check in" with families (at least quarterly) and to invite them to various unit functions. In either case, the phone calls may reveal family problems that can be solved within or outside of the unit.

Phones can also be of great help in dispelling rumors by quickly countering erroneous information. Effective and accurate management of the phone system is best accomplished if: (1) there is a single point of contact (POC) who is in charge of what information the phone system will disseminate; (2) everyone knows in advance that the phone system will only transmit official (verified) information; and (3) the phone contact people are properly trained and agree not to gossip or spread rumors. Even with these

precautions, the phone system can spread incorrect information. Official information tends to be censored (for security reasons) and therefore may lag well behind what is really happening and being transmitted from soldier to spouse via long-distance phone calls, faxes, or e-mail.[18]

Phone threes have other limitations as well. Some FSG members may not have telephones in their homes. This limitation can be overcome if someone is willing to visit that family. Similarly, the callers may not be willing to pay charges (e.g., long-distance calls) to contact all of the FSG members on their list. That problem can be overcome by finding a volunteer who is willing to go into the unit headquarters and use the government telephone.[19]

The phone lists can also be a problem. Not only must the unit verify family telephone numbers at the start of the deployment, but it must be willing to help the FSG keep them current, since families (particularly junior enlisted families) often relocate if the deployment is going to extend for more than a few weeks. Likewise, the FSG must balance the need to contact all members quickly (suggesting that the master list is available to all callers) with the need for members' privacy (suggesting that the list be restricted to a few trusted callers). How this contradiction should be handled must be left to each FSG to work out within its own situation.

An alternative way of broadcasting unit news is to do it all via government telephones. For example, one unit put in a phone bank so that a few individuals could call the entire brigade. This group also had a computer assisted tracking system that allowed them to record any family problems encountered during the phone call and to track how they were resolved. A second group turned the phone tree into a social event in which the callers were rewarded for making the calls on unit phones by having a potluck and an audio conference with the deployed unit. A third group put the latest news on the unit's answering machine so that this message (and the date it was recorded) was available on a 24-hour basis to whoever called in.[20]

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[18] An alternative (or supplemental) way of killing rumors is to post what the current rumor is along with what the true situation is. The places where spouses are most likely to see these notices are at the entrances to the rooms where they pick up mail or "Leave and Earning Statements (LES)." Note that some installations take over the rumor killing business by having a central office that can be called to report or get clarity about rumors. An alternative strategy is for the post to have a regularly scheduled, post-wide meeting where rumors are discussed.

[19] It is always possible that the FSG will have an important message that needs to be distributed to its members at a time when there is no one who can get to a government telephone to call those living out of town. Some FSG leaders have suggested that this problem can be overcome by asking members who live out of town to give their permission to be called collect when the message is urgent. Getting such permission can be handled during pre-deployment processing. Other FSG leaders, however, say collect calls are a bad idea because the caller and the person being called may disagree on how important the call really was. Furthermore, if there are many "important" calls, the resulting phone bill may be rather expensive. In any case, one needs to think about how to handle these kinds of situations before deployments actually start.

[20] With the right equipment, you can set up your voice mail to provide different types of information. For example, it could tell about upcoming meetings if the caller presses "1" and what is going on with the unit in the field if "2" is pressed.

D. Other forms of communication.

The remaining ways in which FSGs have communicated with their members include a unit handbook, a periodic newsletter, personal cards or letters, and electronic mail ("e-mail"). All of these types of communication require having up-to-date unit rosters (see paragraph E, below).

1. Unit handbooks. All members of the unit family benefit from having current information about the nature of Army life and helpful hints about how to cope with it. Although a great deal has been written about this topic, there is a need for each family attached to a rapid deployment unit to have this information available in printed form for easy reference. The unit handbook should contain the following: a brief discussion of what Army life is like, helpful hints (that are neither condescending nor too prescriptive) on how best to navigate the recurring challenges, a brief description of the unit, and information about installation-based forms of assistance. It should also contain a comprehensive list of helping "agents," along with their names, phone numbers, and addresses, so that family members can contact them, if any needs arise.

If your installation already has a good family support manual, you may wish to limit your efforts to producing a short supplement that contains information specific to your unit or to the current deployment (e.g., the names and phone numbers for your unit's points of contact). If you are listing FSG volunteers in this handout, be sure that you have their permission to publish this kind of personal information about them before you go to press.

2. Newsletters. The FSG newsletter is one of the most important parts of the FSG's outreach and communication programs. Its purposes include: creating family camaraderie, relaying command information, reducing social isolation, conveying the command's concern for families, providing information about installation and emergency services, helping family members understand what the unit is doing and why it is doing it, and providing information about unit-sponsored and military activities.

Although newsletters share some of the same purposes as handbooks, meetings, and telephone trees, they have added value. Newsletters can provide more current information on given topics than can be put into a handbook. They are more sparing of volunteer time than operating the telephone tree. They cover more detail than can be conveyed in telephone contacts. They are also more available to the unit families in that they can be consulted at any time. They often reach an audience different from the FSG meetings – spouses who are too busy or too far away to attend the meetings. They also provide an opportunity for unit and FSG leaders to demonstrate their concern for families without having to establish direct contact.

The main challenges in setting up a newsletter are (1) deciding what it should contain, (2) deciding how often it should be sent, and (3) getting someone (or a group) to write, produce, address, stamp and mail it. The information should be pertinent, complete, objective, and current. By signing the newsletter at the masthead or within the

commander's corner or column, the commander is certifying that the newsletter contains correct information and, if so designated, is official information only.

The newsletter can be sent using normal unit funds if the commander determines that the content fits the following guidelines: The information relates to unit mission and readiness (including family readiness); it is educational in nature (designed to promote informed, self-reliant service members and families); and/or it promotes unit cohesion and morale. Birthdays of soldiers, promotions, and the arrival of new soldiers and their families can also be considered official business.

Distributing the newsletter can be by first-class mail or bulk mail. If the newsletter is mailed first class (and therefore comes back to the unit if the address is no longer correct), the unit and FSG will be able to update rosters and, thereby, keep the family informed about the unit, particularly if there is an emergency. Some installations, however, have regulations that require newsletters to be sent by bulk mail, so check to see what is permissible on your post before you distribute them.

Some FSGs also recommend that someone from the FSG hand deliver the latest copy of the newsletter to new families as a way of getting to know them and determining if they have unmet needs, before including them in the next mailing. This practice can also be used to welcome the new family and to urge them to become involved in unit activities (including the FSG). Specific guidance about how newsletters are produced and mailed is covered in Appendix E and in Section VI, which discusses the relevant Army Regulations.

3. Personal cards and letters. In addition to official correspondence, FSGs may want to send cards or notes in honor of birthdays, awards, new children (biological or adopted), or graduations from civilian or military schools. They may also wish to send cards and letters to family members who are hospitalized or have experienced personal loss. Although this type of attention is appreciated, it must be carried out for all unit families or it may become a source of resentment, particularly if those who are left off the list (for whatever reason) feel they are being discriminated against.

The FSG may also wish to help facilitate communication with the deployed soldiers by organizing a common card, e-mail, fax, or teleconference with the soldiers in the field.

4. Electronic mail (e-mail). Conduct of FSG business has been greatly improved by the general availability of e-mail (as well as telephone links) between FSG leaders and the unit in the field. In fact, USAREUR has begun to put e-mail connections into some of its government quarters to facilitate these exchanges. Likewise, FSG leaders have said that computers, in general, and e-mail, in particular, have made it easier to pass FSG information among FSG volunteers and to get out the unit newsletter. However, there is resistance to broadcasting FSG news via e-mail: (1) many families (particularly in the

lower ranks) do not have this technology[21] and (2) it is still a rather impersonal medium. Families would rather hear the news from a live person than via a machine.[22]

5. Cellular telephones and/or beepers. FSG leaders might find these devices helpful. However, the only persons who have made consistent use of this technology have been RD personnel and on-call duty chaplains who are available on a 24-hour basis so that they can be responsive to family needs around the clock. In contrast, FSG leaders are urged to use their answering machines (or voice mail) to take a break from the needs of the unit family so that they can pace themselves and meet the needs of their own families. Likewise, some commanders have arranged for their RDs to have toll free telephones to keep in touch with family members who are living (temporarily or permanently) some distance from where the unit deployed. RDs that have made use of this technology report that it works very well if there is someone who is "on call" (24 hours a day/7 days a week) to respond to emergencies and if the RD has access to someone who is stationed close to where the families are located to provide "hands-on" services when required.

E. Rosters.

There are three types of rosters used by FSGs: the unit roster, the FSG membership roster, and the FSG volunteer roster. Although the rosters have common elements, it is important to differentiate among them because of the legal standing that each has and, therefore, what can be done with them.

1. The unit roster. This list contains updated names, addresses, and telephone numbers of all soldiers and their families within the unit. The family information comes from the official unit roster and the emergency contact form each soldier completes. It is updated at the start of each deployment. It is used by the unit to alert soldiers for deployments and to notify next of kin (in case of an accident or other emergency situation). A version of this list, which includes the names of all soldiers who give their permission to be contacted by the FSG, can be released to the FSG leaders and key volunteers. It is not released to other agencies or to the general unit membership or families. The accuracy of this list is the responsibility of the unit. However, it is frequently out of date, particularly during long deployments – a situation that is associated with family relocation, especially among the families of junior enlisted

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[21] There is a distinct bias in who has access to computer-based communications. In 1998 (the latest figures that are available), only 57% of officer spouses and 23% of enlisted spouses had access to e-mail and web pages via their own home computers.

[22] There are also prohibitions on what kinds of information can be put online because of both privacy and security concerns. Since this is an area of rapid change in what is and is not permitted, we would urge you to check with your installation security and legal people before posting information to any electronic media. Likewise, you would not want to tell someone that her/his family had experienced a serious injury or death via e-mail or an answering machine; this type of news should be delivered in person. Lastly, there is a debate about the extent to which e-mail should be used. Some feel it is quite efficient; others feel it is entirely too impersonal, particularly if the same message is broadcast to many FSG members at the same time.

personnel.[23] Because FSG members are most likely to be contacting families and, hence, most likely to determine that some element of the family status has changed, the FSG should notify the unit about revisions to the unit roster.

2. FSG membership roster. This, also, is a list of names, addresses, and telephone numbers of soldiers and family members from the unit. Although this roster starts from what is in the unit roster, it changes over time and must be updated regularly. It may include individuals who join (girlfriends, boyfriends, or members of the soldier's extended family) and exclude individuals who ask to be removed from FSG membership. To emphasize that the FSG is a voluntary organization, the personal data information form may include a statement ensuring the individual's privacy and explain what the information will be used for. This roster should be discussed with soldiers and family members during unit in-processing, newcomers' briefings, or FSG meetings.

3. The FSG volunteer roster. This is the most public roster of all. Not only should the unit members and the families have it, but also it should be made available to all helping agencies on post. It contains the name, address, and telephone number of each unit volunteer and contact person. These people must be known throughout the post and they must be seen as being knowledgeable and helpful to the unit soldiers and their extended families.

F. Assistance during times of trauma.

The Army has a well developed and time-tested method of officially notifying the next of kin of soldiers who have been injured or killed while on active duty. This system provides that a chaplain and a casualty assistance officer will go together as a team to deliver the news to the family. Furthermore, they remain with the family as long as needed to help them understand what has happened to the soldier and how the Army and the family's own resources can be mobilized to help. FSG members do not normally accompany casualty assistance teams. However, they may be asked to advise the casualty assistance team about the nature and effectiveness of the family's coping style. If FSG member(s) are asked to go along on a visit, they usually stay a short distance from the home until they are signaled to help out. FSGs should limit their support to the emotional and logistical assistance that is requested by the family, ensuring that it does not duplicate what is being provided by others. The most common service that FSG members provide to the families of deceased soldiers is to stay with the family and (usually) arrange for meals until this help is no longer required.

The FSG can also become involved in other traumatic situations, such as the death or serious illness or injury of a soldier's spouse, child, or other close relative.

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[23] Some experienced FSG leaders urge that the rosters be updated monthly (especially in large units). However, the more critical problem is keeping up with relocations and other changes during deployments. What is needed is a systematic way of learning which family address and telephone numbers are incorrect and what the current information is. Keeping such information current requires not only a good system but also active cooperation between all the parties concerned (i.e., the FSG, the families, the RD, the deployed unit, and the deployed soldiers).

Miscarriages and divorces may also require the help of the FSG, as they can affect not only the soldier but also the entire unit. For additional help on how to carry out this function see Appendix F: Coping with Trauma.

G. Providing material and social support to individual families.

One of the main challenges of Army families is to learn how to cope with life's demands (particularly while the soldier is away). Although "helping" services are available in military installations and civilian communities, the types of help that families are most likely to need during an extended deployment or other military separation are the kinds of things one expects from friends and family members. These needs include someone to: talk to, offer advice, accompany on social outings, provide childcare during an emergency or to give the parent a break, provide a ride, or loan small items that a friend might need to use for a specific task. FSGs are a natural place to make friends and to set up mutual exchanges of assistance which benefit everyone. Nonetheless, if families believe their needs will go unfulfilled during a deployment, they may opt to "go home."[24]

But what about those families who do not "go home" yet do not have friends to help them meet special or recurring family needs? Shouldn't the FSG provide services to them? Although some soldiers, families, and even Army leaders believe FSGs exist to provide direct, personal services to whichever family needs them, that is not the intent of FSGs. It is the soldier's responsibility to ensure that s/he has provided the social and material supports necessary to allow the family to cope in his/her absence. It is the non-deployed spouse's responsibility to get to know his/her neighbors, who can and will meet reasonable requests.[25] It is the FSG's responsibility to provide opportunities for spouses to get to know each other, learn how to cope, and become acquainted with the Army's support systems. If, for whatever reason, the FSG does undertake to provide direct services, be sure that the individuals providing the assistance are "true volunteers" and fully appreciate the scope of the task(s) they have volunteered to do.

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[24] Research has shown that the families who "go home" are those who do not have natural ties to the community (e.g., they do not own a house, the spouse is not employed, or the couple has no school-age children). In fact, one study showed that during the Gulf War 44% of junior enlisted families in the Active Force "went home." Research also showed that these families are motivated by the need to get reliable social support and that their adjustment to the deployment is comparable to those young spouses who remained at the home post throughout the war.

[25] Although Army doctrine clearly stresses that soldiers are responsible for ensuring that their families can cope successfully while they are absent, there are cases in which families require some form of help that they cannot, for whatever reason, get from their friends and neighbors. Usually this is some kind of help with transportation, childcare, or finances. Some FSG leaders provide these kinds of direct service because they believe, as one leader put it, "A good unit and FSG takes care of its own and everyone in the unit knows it!" Other leaders feel obligated to provide such assistance to avoid criticism from the unit soldiers or higher headquarters. If the FSG has someone who is willing and able to provide help to individual families, then "taking care of our own" can be a winning strategy. However, you should also consider the alternative strategies discussed in Section VII as a way of helping the FSG, the unit, and the needy families. For a more detailed discussion of this issue, see Bell, Stevens, & Segal (1996).

Nothing wears out FSG leaders more than personally trying to meet the recurring demands of one or more unit families that have no intention of becoming independent. Here is a quick summary of the types of families/spouses who generate most of the workload for both the Army's volunteer and professional family support systems – and the recommended ways to handle them.

1. The multiple-problem family. These families have notable problems (e.g., poor financial management, spouse or child abuse, or problems with schools or the law) even before the deployment begins. They are usually well known in the family support community. They should be referred to the professional staff for attention. FSG attempts to help are unlikely to succeed and may make things worse.

2. Excessively dependent spouses. These often young and inexperienced spouses usually function well as long as the soldier is present. However, they are unable to function alone because they lack the skills or because the soldier has taken away many of the essential tools for running a household (e.g., a car and access to a checking account). Most of these spouses can and do become independent with coaching and some short-term help.

3. Excessively demanding spouses. These spouses expect the FSG or the Army to provide them with services on demand. They are seldom satisfied with what is done for them, often claiming that it was too little and/or too late. These spouses should be treated with respect yet clearly told what the FSG will and will not do to assist them. Although the Army has taken the soldier away, it is not obligated to fill in the gaps.

4. Families that scheme early returns. These spouses (often with their soldiers' help) plot to develop some scenario that will result in the early return of the soldier from the deployment. The indicator that you are facing a scam rather than a crisis is that each of your suggestions for how to continue to cope with the absence will be met with an objection for why that suggestion will not work and repetition that only the soldier's return will fix the problem. These families are particularly hard to work with because they require the same time and attention, but they really don't want your help. They just want to use you to get their soldiers home. FSGs and other helping groups must cooperate with the command to foil this type of scheme. Everyone must make it clear that "the game" will not work; that the soldier will not be coming home. If the Army and FSG leaders do not hang together, they may generate more "family crises" than they had initially.

Section V: How do I get an FSG going?

FSGs are hurt by the natural turnover in personnel that occurs in response to soldier movements across units and Army installations. Therefore, there is a frequent need to start or re-energize FSGs. This section provides an overview of the initiation/renewal process; for more details, see Appendix G.

A. Leadership.

Leaders are members of the unit family who direct the overall activities of the FSG or who oversee a particular FSG activity or project. All leaders are volunteers; no one can or should be forced to assume a leadership position. The unit commander appoints all leaders, in writing, and should evaluate them (at least informally) every six months, offering praise for what is going well and suggestions for areas in need of improvement. For the welfare of the FSG, the commander must be prepared to remove from office any leader who is not performing adequately after being asked to reform. FSG leaders are considered to be federal employees in the case of on-the-job injuries, the care of unit equipment, and their standards of conduct.[26] FSG leaders are also required to report to the commander any violations of the law that they observe or hear about (including any misuse of government equipment).

Research shows that the most likely person to lead an FSG is the commander's spouse.[27] This is not a bad choice if s/he is the "best person for the job." That is, if s/he: (1) wants to do the job, (2) has good group skills, (3) can use her/his natural relationships with the unit command and higher headquarters to further the interests of FSG members, and (4) can operate the FSG in a democratic and non-rank based fashion. Some commanders' spouses, though they possess the skills and the interests in families, find it more comfortable to be co-leaders with other FSG members or to adopt the role of senior advisor, troubleshooter, and cheerleader[28] while someone else actually operates the FSG.

There are a number of reasons why the commander's spouse may not be the best choice for leader. The spouse may not live near the unit, may be employed outside of the home in a demanding full-time job, or may not have the personal desire to fill the leadership position. In such cases, the commander will have to organize an FSG election for leader or solicit nominations for leader so that the best candidate can be selected from among those who wish to fulfill this function.

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[26] See U. S. Code Title 5, chapter 81 and Title 28, chapter 171.

[27] In a Gulf War-era survey, 59% of battalion-level FSG leaders said they assumed the leadership position because they were married to the commander, 37% said they had volunteered, and 5% said they were elected. At the company level the percents were 59%, 29%, and 12%, respectively.

[28] This idea is best described by a quote from an Army War College publication (modified to make it gender neutral). "As a cheerleader, s/he encourages the ideas, activities, and projects which the group initiates. As a troubleshooter, s/he cuts red tape or smoothes over obstacles that surface along the way. S/he sets a tone of enthusiasm and high morale by being friendly, sincere, and fair. The commander's spouse is looked upon as a role model. Whether s/he works outside the home, attends school, volunteers, or pursues her/his own interests, her/his influence on the unit can be very positive. It's just important that s/he be herself/himself. No one wants her/him to be a martyr." (Army War College, 1992, p. 5)

In fact, being elected gives a leader more informal legitimacy than is apparent in a simple appointment. Individuals who are elected are also more likely to reflect what the FSG members want. However, there are two major disadvantages to electing leaders. First of all, the chosen leader may not be able to work effectively with the commander, which could result in a dysfunctional FSG or an early leader resignation. The second problem is "timing." If the election is held too early, the best candidate may not be prominent enough to be elected. If the election is held too late, the best candidate may no longer be available. Remember that the kind of individual you want to lead an FSG is in great demand by all of the helping agencies on the post.

Regardless of how the leader is chosen, s/he is quickly confronted with the tasks of deciding (in consultation with others) what the FSG will look like, recruiting volunteers, setting up regular meetings with the unit commander, acquiring (and frequently updating) rosters, meeting key installation personnel and learning what they do, and establishing/revitalizing the FSG telephone notification system and unit newsletter. What the FSG looks like and how much it gets accomplished is a function of not only the skills, motivations, and vision of the FSG leaders, but also the needs and interests of the FSG members. Leaders and volunteers are more likely to give their energy to this enterprise if the unit is undergoing a long, overseas deployment.[29]

B. FSG structures.

The most frequently mentioned structure for FSGs pertains to a battalion and its subordinate companies. The battalion level leader and a leader from each company form the leadership group for the entire FSG. If the main services being offered are a telephone contact system and periodic meetings for the entire battalion, there may be relatively few sub-leaders. There may be a senior advisor (usually the battalion commander's spouse) and some willing workers who are often called "contacts" because they act as conduits for information that the battalion wishes to pass to the FSG members or the FSG members want to pass to the battalion. If there are more volunteers, the phone system may acquire its own leader. If the FSG wants to have periodic newsletters and/or to publish an FSG manual to help spouses understand deployments or a particular deployment, those publications may get a leader and (hopefully) some volunteers to help get the work accomplished. If someone wants to organize the meetings, recreational events, and/or outings, that function may also get a leader. If the FSG wants to get more done than it has volunteers, it may ask that some volunteers do more than one function.

Although the battalion model spelled out above is quite typical, there are viable alternatives. A battalion FSG may decide to organize geographically either by setting up buddy pairs who live close to one another or by having the assignment of functions based

[29] For example, prior to the Gulf War 27% of spouses said that their soldiers' unit had an active FSG. This figure climbed to 62% during the war and then dropped to 27% after the war was over (see Bell, Stevens, and Segal, 1996, for details).

on where people live (e.g., the "blue bird housing community" holds meetings, keeps each other informed, or gives parties).[30]

C. Recruiting and keeping volunteers.[31]

Acquiring volunteers results largely from a willingness to ask the right people and an ability to offer something they can do. Certain FSG volunteer positions are self-evident (e.g., FSG leader and phone tree leader), while others are useful only in certain circumstances (e.g., welcoming committee leader). Other positions may be relevant only for a particular unit at a particular installation and at a particular time (e.g., someone to coordinate FSG activities with a major one-time local event). Some positions might be created to fit the talents of a particular FSG member (e.g., a spouse who is an expert in resume writing, auto repair, or cooking might volunteer to teach a class or coordinate the work of others).

There are limitations on what volunteers can be asked to do.[32] When asking for volunteers or approaching someone to do a particular job, the following guidelines apply:

- Explain the nature of the job clearly; if possible, provide a written job description (see Table 9 in Appendix G).
- Give the candidate the relevant guides or other tools to accomplish the job.
- Establish a line of communication to resolve problems or investigate opportunities.
- Set limits on how long the individual should serve.
- Never apologize for asking for volunteers.

If the position is hard to fill, consider revising it. Sometimes making it more challenging or tying it to tasks that particularly interest the potential volunteer will make it easier to fill.

Be on the lookout for obstacles that may explain why people aren't volunteering. Often it is because they are new to the post and haven't been asked, they lack transportation, or people have assumed they are not qualified or interested. These problems can and should be overcome.

Many volunteers need orientation to the work setting, as well as training on the duties of their positions (e.g., with whom they will interface inside and outside of the FSG). If the FSG has been assigned office space either by itself or with other FSGs, the volunteers may need to know something about the standards for appearance and office behavior.

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[30] A variation of this idea has been tried successfully in the North Carolina National Guard, where senior spouse volunteers provided support and training for families living in different communities regardless of the unit to which the deployed soldier happened to belong. In some countries, the FSG position has been professionalized, but the suggestion that it be professionalized here was rejected by the Army in 1992 (see U. S. Army War College, 1992, for details).

[31] For more information see Appendix G.

[32] For example, volunteers cannot be used to perform duties for which there is an unfilled (paid) manpower requirement within the civil service system or for which funding has been approved for added staff or a contracted service.

Most of these items should be spelled out in the written position descriptions given to volunteers when they sign up for a position.

Volunteers may need supportive direction, especially if they are doing a new type of work, yet you should avoid the temptation to micro-manage what they do. Some informal, constructive evaluation may be appropriate, leading perhaps to recognition for what a volunteer has done, chances for "advancement" within the FSG, or opportunities for additional training. If a volunteer is not working out, it may be that s/he is not receiving from the assignment what s/he wanted in terms of challenge, recognition, meeting people, personal growth, or use of natural talents. Changing assignments, changing the nature of the job, or additional training may fix the situation. If a volunteer leaves a position, for whatever reason, try to make the departure a positive experience by reminding the volunteer of what s/he accomplished and of how important the contribution was. Appendix G (How to Start or Re-energize an FSG) contains information regarding what motivates people to volunteer and how to recognize their services.

If you get into an adverse situation, be sure to document your counseling sessions and other efforts to improve the situation. If the reason for termination is a breach of ethics or confidentiality, the FSG leader (with the backing of the commander) must be willing to terminate the volunteer's services immediately.

D. Avoiding leader burnout.

Remember that you cannot help others if you do not take care of yourself. Share the burdens of running the FSG by delegating responsibilities to others. Avoid overextending yourself by setting priorities for FSG functions and recruiting adequate numbers of volunteers to help (see Section IV and Appendix G). Don't "reinvent the wheel"; become familiar with the resources that exist and seek the input of senior spouses. Get help with the taxing families, and refer dysfunctional families to the appropriate professional agencies. Remember that you can't be all things to all people! If the pressure becomes too great, turn on the answering machine rather than answer the phone. Eat, sleep, and exercise regularly. Spend time with your own family, and reserve time for having fun.

Section VI: What must I avoid to stay out of trouble with Army Regulations?

This section provides a brief description of the areas in which FSGs most often run into legal trouble (i.e., raising funds, spending funds, and using government equipment). It ends with a listing of all of the relevant Army Regulations (ARs) that currently apply to FSGs. Nonetheless, we urge you to check with your local Judge Advocate General's office if you have any questions, because all of what is said here is subject to change.

FSGs have access to three types of funds: Appropriated Funds (AF), Non-Appropriated Funds (NAF), and self-generated funds (e.g., proceeds from fund-raisers or gifts). Relevant documents that describe what you can do to get and use these types of funds include DFAS-IN 37-1, AR 608-1, AR 215-1, Standard Form 1164, and Section 501 of the IRS code. The names of these documents are spelled out in Table 2 at the end of this section so that you can acquire them or talk to others about them.

If a driver has a valid and current license to operate a given type of government vehicle, that vehicle can be used to support FSG activities. However, the driver (soldier or civilian) must be a good driver, and the commander must certify that the use is for official purposes and that failure to provide the vehicle would have an adverse effect on soldier morale (AR 58-1, AR 600-55, AR 385-40, and DA Pamphlet 608-47). Permission must be granted in writing prior to use. Not only is use of government vehicles for private purposes forbidden, but if an offending individual were to be involved in an accident, heavy costs would be levied against him/her.

FSGs are allowed access to government space and equipment to perform FSG business. These items include unit day rooms, dining facilities, chapels, theaters, and lawns. The equipment includes desks, chairs, telephones, copying machines, computers, and file cabinets. In fact, many installations have fully equipped office and meeting space available for FSG use.

The production of newsletters is governed by AR 608-47, AR 25-30, DA Pamphlet 608-47 (paragraph 3-2b), and DoD Regulation 4525.8 (chapter 3).

Table 2 Government Regulations and Guidance Relevant to FSGs[33]	
AR 25-30	"The Army Integrated Publishing and Printing Program" (Effective July 15, 1996)
AR 58-1	"Management, Acquisition, and Use of Administrative Use Motor Vehicles" (Effective March 1, 1981)
AR 215-1	"Morale, Welfare, and Recreation Activities and Unappropriated Fund Instrumentalities" (Effective October 25, 1998)
AR 385-40	"Accident Reporting and Record" (Effective November 1, 1994)
AR 600-55	"The Army Driver and Operator Standardization Program: Selection, Training, Testing, and Licensing" (Effective December 31, 1993)
AR 608-1	"Army Community Services Program" (Effective January 23, 1998)
AR 608-47	"A Guide to Establishing Family Support Groups" (Effective August 16, 1993)
DA Pamphlet 608-47	"A Guide to Establishing Family Support Groups" (Effective August 16, 1993)
DFAS-IN 37-1	"Finance and Accounting Policy Information" (Effective September 18, 1995)
DoD Regulation 4525.8	"Department of Defense Official Mail Manual" (Effective July 1987)
IRS Tax Code - Section 501	"Exemption from Tax on Corporations, Certain Trusts, etc."
Standard Form 1164	"Claim for Reimbursement for Expenditures on Official Business"

[33] Most of these documents and regulations are accessible via the Internet.
For all AR (Army Regulation) texts:
http://books.army.mil/cgi-bin/bookmgr/Shelves
For Section 501 of the IRS Tax Code:
http://www.fournilab.ch/ustax/www/t26-A-1-F-1-501.html#(c)(3)
For DFAS-IN 37-1 text:
http://www.asafm.army.mil/ use link to "DFAS"
For DoD Regulation 4525.8 text:
http://web7.whs.osd.mil/html/45258m.htm
We would urge all Army Community Service (ACS) offices to keep recent copies of the regulations on file for FSG use since many FSG leaders do not have computers or do not wish to spend a lot of time researching them. An added service would be for the ACS to have someone on their staff who is up on what the regulations say or can quickly find out what they say about specific FSG issues.

Section VII: What are other sources of help for FSG leaders and members?

Your installation and the Army, as a whole, have a vested interest in seeing that your FSG and unit families succeed. Ask your local Army Community Service (ACS) what they and other agencies on post can do to help you establish and operate a good FSG. They will be glad to assist.

You are not expected to solve all of the problems of your unit families. There are a number of agencies on your post that will assist. Make it a point to visit with at least the ones that unit families are most likely to use: the ACS, the Unit and Family Life Chaplains, and the Judge Advocate General (JAG) office.

The following list includes agencies that families may find helpful. It is ONLY AN EXAMPLE of the services available on a typical post. You are encouraged to create a list of family support services for your own post, including the relevant building locations and phone numbers so that you (and your unit's families) will know at a glance whom to call in case of an emergency. If your post already has such a list, you may wish simply to copy it or update it.

Table 3
Typical Family Support Services
(modify to fit your installation)

The ALCOHOL AND DRUG CONTROL OFFICE (ADCO) strives to educate the entire military community, including family members and DA civilians, on alcohol and drug abuse and on personal roles in rehabilitation and prevention. Often the Alcohol and Drug Control Office coordinates enforcement and command referral actions with individuals who may have a drug or alcohol problem.

The AMERICAN RED CROSS assists with communications between the soldier and his/her family in emergency and compassionate situations. It provides emergency financial assistance and many volunteer service activities. Programs often include youth, as well as adult, courses in health, nursing, safety, first aid, and swimming.

The ARMY COMMUNITY SERVICE (ACS) provides assistance to military families through its information and referral services, budget and indebtedness counseling, household item loan closet, emergency food locker, information on other military posts, and welcome packet to new arrivals. It also maintains a volunteer organization to support the local community.
Its six core component programs include

* Consumer Affairs & Financial Assistance Program (CAFAP)
* Family Member Employment Assistance Program (FMEAP)
* Exceptional Family Member Program (EFMP)
* Family Advocacy Program (FAP)
* Relocation Assistance Program (RAP)
* Mobilization & Deployment Support

Table continues

Table 3 continued

The ARMY EMERGENCY RELIEF (AER) gives financial assistance through interest-free loans or grants in situations involving medical expenses, family member funerals, required travel, basic living necessities, or disaster assistance. Army Emergency Relief personnel also provide personal budget counseling and coordinate student loans through Army Emergency Relief Education Loan Programs.

The CAREER COUNSELORS provide current information and explanations on prerequisites for reenlistment, selective reenlistment bonuses, and reenlistment options. They are also a good source of information about service benefits and programs.

The CHAPLAINS work closely with support activities in the local community. Unit Chaplains provide pastoral counseling, visitation, worship opportunities, personal sacramental rites and ordinances according to their denominational affiliation. Installation Family Life Chaplains can provide a variety of special programs (e.g., training on personal effectiveness or parenting skills, couple's communication seminars, religious retreats), in addition to offering marriage and family counseling. (Not all installations have a Family Life Chaplain. When they are present, they are usually located in the Garrison Chapel or in a specified Family Life Center.)

The CHILD DEVELOPMENT SERVICES (CDS) offers quality childcare options with various types of services, locations, hours of operation, and fee schedules that are responsive to the needs of military families living both on and off post.[34]

The CIVILIAN PERSONNEL OFFICE (CPO) handles employment information and opportunities concerning civil service and non-appropriated fund jobs.

The CLAIMS SECTION, STAFF JUDGE ADVOCATE facilitates claims for and against the government, most often those for loss and damage to household goods. It processes the medical expense claims of soldiers and their families who receive treatment at Army facilities for conditions caused by negligent third parties.

The COMMUNITY COUNSELING CENTER provides alcohol and drug abuse prevention and control programs for the installation. These programs are directed and coordinated by the Alcohol and Drug Control Office.

The COMMUNITY HEALTH NURSE provides many preventive healthcare services, including home and office visits, consultations, and group health instruction. The Health Nurse often serves as liaison with the civilian community health professionals and makes references to various military healthcare professionals of mental health facilities.

Table continues

[34] Although the CDS provides childcare services, across the entire Active Force only 11% of the childcare for children 4 years old and younger is provided by that facility. In fact, friends and neighbors provide the bulk (44%) of the childcare for this age group.

Table 3 continued

The COMMUNITY MENTAL HEALTH SERVICE provides assistance to soldiers and their family members through a professional staff of secretaries, social workers, psychologists, and behavioral science specialists. They conduct counseling treatment services, psychotherapy, crisis intervention, evaluations, and consultations.

The EDUCATION CENTER (ED CENTER) provides counseling services, testing services, and Army Learning Center and education programs. As space permits, family members are welcome to take classes offered by colleges at the Ed Center.

The EQUAL OPPORTUNITY STAFF OFFICE is available to service members and their families for matters involving discrimination on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, and religion. It provides information on procedures for initiating complaints, guidance on what constitutes an equal opportunity complaint, and assistance in resolving complaints informally.

The HOUSING REFERRAL OFFICE gives soldiers counseling, guidance, and up-to-date information on the local situation, both rental and sales. Soldiers are required to contact the housing referral office before entering into any off-post lease or agreement. This office is responsible for receiving and processing complaints for discrimination in off-post housing.

The INSTALLATION VOLUNTEER PROGRAM operates a centralized volunteer program for all agencies requiring volunteers on post. It not only affords individuals the opportunity to help the community but also promotes the learning of new job skills and the gaining of creditable work experience.

The LEGAL ASSISTANT, STAFF JUDGE ADVOCATE employs a staff of lawyers and paraprofessionals. They may provide information or act as counsel in matters of contracts, debts, citizenship, adoption, marital problems, taxes, wills, or powers of attorney.

The SOCIAL WORK SERVICE provides services dealing with social problems, including crisis intervention, family therapy, marital counseling, abortion or adoption referral, and parent or child management assistance.

The VETERINARY CLINIC offers preventive veterinary services for privately owned animals, such as immunizations and health certificates. Animals housed on post need to be registered with the post veterinarian.

Appendix A: Major Documents Used in Writing This Report[1]

III Corps and Fort Hood. (1998a). Family Support Group handbook. Fort Hood, TX: Author.

III Corps and Fort Hood. (1998b). Family support guide to deployment (III Corps and Fort Hood Pamphlet 608-3). Fort Hood, TX: Author.

160th Special Operations Aviation Regiment (Airborne). (1998). Casualty notification guide. Fort Campbell, KY: Author.

Adler, A. B. (1995). Family stress during a peacekeeping deployment (TR-95-0021). Heidelberg, GE: U. S. Army Medical Research Unit - Europe.

Amen, D. G., Jellen, L., Merves, E., & Lee, R. E. (1988). Minimizing the impact of deployment separation on military children: Stages, current preventive efforts, and system recommendations. Military Medicine, 153, 441-446.

Army Family Liaison Office. (1995). Some things you might want to know... A resource booklet for Army family members. Washington, DC: Author.

Bell, D. B., Bartone, J., Bartone, P. T., Schumm, W. R., & Gade, P. A. (1997). USAREUR family support during Operation Joint Endeavor: Summary report (Special Report 34). Alexandria, VA: U. S. Army Research Institute for the Behavioral and Social Sciences. (AD A339 016)

Bell, D. B., & Iadeluca, R. B. (1987). The origins of voluntary support for Army family programs (Research Report 1456). Alexandria, VA: U. S. Army Research Institute for the Behavioral and Social Sciences. (AD A190 587)

Bell, D. B., & Schumm, W. R. (1999). Family adaptation to deployments. In Peggy McClure (Ed.), Pathways to the future: A review of military family research. Scranton, PA: Military Family Institute, Marywood University.

Bell, D. B., Stevens, M. L., & Segal, M. W. (1996). How to support families during overseas deployments: A sourcebook for service providers (Research Report 1687). Alexandria, VA: U. S. Army Research Institute for the Behavioral and Social Sciences. (AD A304 281)

Bowman, E. (1998). Family Support Group handbook. Fort Bragg, NC: Army Community Service.

Bowman, E. (1999). Family Support Group readiness handbook. Fort Bragg, NC: Army Community Service.

[1] The letters included in some citation dates (e.g., 1998a) correspond to the item's listing in Appendix B.

Burk, S., & Peterson, P. (n.d.). Visual aids: A guide to effective presentations. Fort Hood, TX: Fort Hood Army Community Service.

DoD Office of Family Policy, Support and Service. (n.d.). The good ideas handbook: A guide to unique Family Center programs throughout DoD. Washington, DC: Author.

Educational Publication, Inc. (1993a). What's next? A guide to family readiness for the National Guard. Elkins, PA: Author.

Educational Publication, Inc. (1993b). What's next? A guide to family readiness for the U. S. Army. Elkins, PA: Author.

Family Advocacy Program, Fort Hood. (1996). Mission readiness – A personal and family guide. Fort Hood, TX: Author.

Granovsky, N. (1998). Family Support Group leader basic handbook (Operation READY). Alexandria, VA: U. S. Army Community and Family Support Center.

Headquarters, Department of the Army. (1992). Personal financial readiness and deployability handbook (Training Circular 21-7). Washington, DC: Author.

Headquarters, Department of the Army. (1993). A guide to establishing Family Support Groups (DA Pamphlet 608-47). Washington, DC: Author.

Office of the Chief of Chaplains, Department of the Army. (1990). Reunion! Training resources for the unit ministry team. Washington, DC: Author.

Segal, D. R., & Segal, M. W. (1993). Peacekeepers and their wives: American participation in the Multinational Force and Observers. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press.

Segal, M. W., & Harris, J. J. (1993). What we know about Army families (Special Report 21). Alexandria, VA: U. S. Army Research Institute for the Behavioral and Social Sciences.

Task Force 1-160th Special Operations Aviation Regiment (Airborne). (1998). Casualty notification guide. Fort Campbell, KY: Author.

Task Force 1-160th Special Operations Aviation Regiment (Airborne). (n.d.). Family Support Group handbook. Fort Campbell, KY: Author.

U. S. Army Community and Family Support Center. (1994g). Postdeployment: Homecoming and reunion (Operation READY). Alexandria, VA: Author.

U. S. Army Community and Family Support Center. (1994i). The Army family readiness handbook (Operation READY). Alexandria, VA: Author.

U. S. Army Community and Family Support Center. (1999). Policy guidance for family support. Alexandria, VA: Author.

U. S. Army Community and Family Support Center. (n.d.). "Icebreakers": Fun ways to incorporate activities into Army family team building classes. Alexandria, VA: Author.

U. S. Army War College. (1985). Leaders' wives speak out. Carlisle Barracks, PA: Author.

U. S. Army War College. (1992). Who cares? We do!! Experiences in family support, U. S. Army War college class of 1992 spouses and students. Carlisle Barracks, PA: Author.

U. S. Army War College. (1998a). Choices and challenges: A guide for the battalion commander's spouse. Carlisle Barracks, PA: Author.

U. S. Army War College. (1998b). The spouse's battle book. Carlisle Barracks, PA: Author.

U. S. Army War College. (n.d.). It takes a team: A resource for the company commander's spouse/representative. Carlisle Barracks, PA: Author.

Van Vranken, E. W., Jellen, L. K., Knudson, K. H. M., Marlowe, D. H., & Segal, M. W. (1984). The impact of deployment separation on Army families. (WRAIR Report NP-84-6). Washington, DC: Department of Military Psychiatry, Walter Reed Army Institute of Research.

Wright, K. (1987). The human response to the Gander military air disaster: A summary report. Washington, DC: Walter Reed Army Institute of Research.

Appendix B: Training and Resource Materials for FSG Leaders and Key Volunteers

The following is a list of organizations that provide training materials, or resource materials that can be used to generate training materials, for Family Support Groups. Along with each agency noted below is a list of major documents the agency can provide and a description of how each document could be used.

Note that many of the reports listed in this appendix are also available from the:

Military Family Resource Center
4040 N. Fairfax Drive, Room 421
Arlington, VA 22203-1635
(703) 696-9053 / DSN: 426-9053
Fax: (703) 696-9062 / DSN: 426-9062
http://mfrc.calib.com

Other sources of training and reference materials include the following:

A. U. S. Army Research Institute
5001 Eisenhower Avenue
Alexandria, VA 22333-5600
(703) 617-5532 / DSN: 767-5532
Fax: (703) 617-5674
Director@ari.army.mil
http://www ari.army.mil/ (click on "Products")

1. Training materials: None.

2. Resource Materials:

Bell, D. B., Bartone, J., Bartone, P. T., Schumm, W. R., & Gade, P. A. (1997). USAREUR family support during Operation Joint Endeavor: Summary report (Special Report 34). Alexandria, VA: U. S. Army Research Institute for the Behavioral and Social Sciences. *This report shows how well the family support system worked during a particular deployment – Operation Joint Endeavor in Bosnia.*

Bell, D. B., & Schumm, W. R. (1999). Family adaptation to deployments. In Peggy McClure (Ed.), Pathways to the future: A review of military family research. Scranton, PA: Military Family Institute, Marywood University. *This report covers what research has found to be stressful to family members during various types of deployments.*

Bell, D. B., Stevens, M. L., & Segal, M. W. (1996). How to support families during overseas deployments: A sourcebook for service providers (Research Report 1687). Alexandria, VA: U. S. Army Research Institute for the Behavioral and Social Sciences. *This report tells what research has learned about how well family support systems work during deployments and how to improve them.*

B. U. S. Army Community and Family Support Center (USACFSC)

ATTN: LTC James Jackson
4700 King Street
Alexandria, VA 22302-4418
703-681-7388
Fax: 703-681-7236
JacksonJ@Hoffman.cfsc.army.mil

1. Training Materials:

U. S. Army Community and Family Support Center. (1994a). Army Family Team Building: Family member training - Level I: Introduction. Alexandria, VA: Author. *These comprehensive materials (181 pages) are designed to help an instructor teach new family members how to cope with Army life. Topics covered include: military terms, the chains of command and concern, helping resources, the Army pay-benefits system, family and military expectations, how the Army impacts on family life, and basic problem solving skills.* AFTB Level I is also available at: http://www.gordon.army.mil./roa/aftb/

U. S. Army Community and Family Support Center. (1994b). Army Family Team Building: Family member training - Level II: Intermediate. Alexandria, VA: Author. *These comprehensive materials (520 pages) are designed to help instructors teach emerging community leaders how to help other Army families cope. Topics covered include: helping build relationships, recruiting and using volunteers, management skills, networking, and how to run Family Support Groups.*

U. S. Army Community and Family Support Center. (1994c). Army Family Team Building: Family member training - Level III: Intermediate. Alexandria, VA: Author. *These comprehensive materials (399 pages) are designed to help instructors teach volunteer leaders who are engaged in advisory or mentoring activities how to perform these functions.*

U. S. Army Community and Family Support Center. (1994d). Family Assistance Center (Operation READY). Alexandria, VA: Author. *These lesson plans provide suggestions for how to operate both Active Component and Reserve Component Family Assistance Centers (FACs) during deployment. The lessons also include a 16.5-minute video presentation and associated discussion guide.*[1]

U. S. Army Community and Family Support Center. (1994e). Family Support Group: Advanced training Volume I (Operation READY). Alexandria, VA: Author. *The lesson plans in this material cover leadership skills, planning presentations, and problem solving.*

[1] To get the "Family Assistance Center (FAC)" video, call 717-895-7772 or DSN 795-7772 and ask for it by title. The PON/ICN numbers for this item are 710655/TVT (20-1051).

U. S. Army Community and Family Support Center. (1994f). Family Support Group: Advanced training Volume II (Operation READY). Alexandria, VA: Author. *The lesson plans in this material cover newsletters, volunteer recognition, and video discussion groups. There is a bibliography that includes many good resource materials on a variety of topics. The report also has a discussion guide for use with a 13.5-minute video presentation that covers much of the same material.*[2]

U. S. Army Community and Family Support Center. (1994g). Postdeployment: Homecoming and reunion (Operation READY). Alexandria, VA: Author. *The lesson plans in these materials are aimed at soldiers who are about to come back from an extended deployment or other family separation. It also includes a guide for discussing a 17.5-minute video presentation on this same subject.*[3]

U. S. Army Community and Family Support Center. (1994h). Predeployment - ongoing readiness: Understanding and planning for military separation (Operation READY). Alexandria, VA: Author. *The lesson plans in these materials are aimed at teaching families how to cope with the family separations that are generated by mobilizations, deployments, field-training exercises, and annual training. Discussion guides have been developed for two videos associated with predeployment: "Coping with Military Separations" (22.2 minutes) and "Ongoing Readiness and Financial Planning" (22.3 minutes).*[4]

Granovsky, N. (1998). Family Support Group Leader Basic Handbook (Operation READY). Alexandria, VA: U. S. Army Community and Family Support Center. *This handbook provides a succinct summary of the main issues involved in running an FSG in the form of a series of "bullets." These lists may prove quite handy for those who need quick reminders but they may be too cryptic for use by those who are new to FSGs.*

2. Resource Materials:

U. S. Army Community and Family Support Center. (1994i). The Army family readiness handbook (Operation READY). Alexandria, VA: Author. *This report (193 pages) focuses on deployments. It strives to meet the needs of unit leaders, families, and service providers. It includes such topics as how to set up and operate a Family Support Group, how families cope during deployments, and what units and posts do to support families. There is also a bibliography that includes many good resource materials on a variety of topics. Note, particularly:*

- *the deployment checklists for both soldiers and spouses on pages 127-136, and*
- *the sample pre-deployment briefing found on pages 152-153.*

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[2] To get the "Another Family" video, call 717-895-7772 or DSN 795-7772 and ask for it by title. The PON/ICN numbers for this item are 710651/TVT (20-1047).

[3] To get the video "Getting Back Together," call 717-895-7772 or DSN 795-7772 and ask for it by title. The PON/ICN numbers for this item are 710652/TVT (20-1048).

[4] To get the video "Coping with Military Separations" and/or "Ongoing Readiness and Financial Planning," call 717-895-7772 or DSN 795-7772 and ask for the video by its title. The PON/ICN numbers for these videos are 710654/TVT (20-1050) and 710653/TVT (20-1049), respectively.

U. S. Army Community and Family Support Center. (1999). Policy guidance for family support. Alexandria, VA: Author. *This resource contains six key documents that come into play during Army deployments. They are: the Army mobilization and operations planning and execution system (AMOPES), an interim change to AR600-20 that spells out some "lessons learned" about family support during the Gulf War, an Army Field Manual (FM100-22) that explains how installations are managed, another Army Field Manual (FM12-6) that explains how Army personnel are supported, a manual that spells out how the U. S. Army Community and Family Support Center is supposed to function during an emergency, and the Army Pamphlet (DA Pamphlet 608-47) that tells how to establish Family Support Groups.*

U. S. Army Community and Family Support Center. (n.d.). "Icebreakers": Fun ways to incorporate activities into Army family team-building classes. Alexandria, VA: Author. *This resource provides a variety of brief activities designed to help "strangers" feel more comfortable in a meeting or training environment.*

C. Army Family Liaison Office (FLO)

Headquarters Department of the Army
ATTN: DAIM – ZAF/Mr. David White
Chief of the Family Liaison Office
Room 2D655
600 Army, The Pentagon
Washington, DC 20310-0600
(800) 833-6622 *toll-free help line available from all 50 states, Guam, Puerto Rico, and the Virgin Islands.*
(703) 695-7714/7716 / DSN: 225-7714/7716
Fax: (703) 693-2587
Whited@hqda.army.mil *This reaches the director of the FLO.*
http://www.hqda.army.mil/acsimweb/family/family.htm *This website gets you FLO notes (see description below).*

1. Training Materials: None.

2. Resource Materials:

Army Family Liaison Office. (1995). Some things you might want to know… A resource booklet for Army family members. Washington, DC: Author. *This booklet has useful information for FSG leaders. It is not intended for use by family members, per se.*

FLO Notes is a monthly newsletter filled with helpful information on a wide variety of topics of interest to Army families.

D. U. S. Army War College

ATTN: Chaplain (COL) Joe York, USA(ret)
Carlisle Barracks, PA 17013
(717) 245-4787 / DSN: 242-4787
Fax: (717) 245-4612
Yorkj1@awc.carlisle.army.mil *This gets you the head of AWC family programs*
http://www.army.mil/usawc/dclm/ *This gets you access to printed reports, etc.*

1. Training materials: None.

2. Resource materials:

U. S. Army War College. (1985). Leaders' wives speak out. Carlisle Barracks, PA: Author. *This was the first in a series of manuals prepared by spouses of Army War College resident classes. Compared to later manuals, it represents largely anecdotal ideas and suggestions on various topics of concern to Army spouses.*

U. S. Army War College. (1992). Who cares? We do!! Experiences in family support, U. S. Army War college class of 1992 spouses and students. Carlisle Barracks, PA: Author. *This manual was prepared by the spouses of the 1992 Army War College resident class. While its content is largely anecdotal, ideas are classified into sections on what worked, what didn't work, and advice on preparing for Family Support Group leadership roles. As the ideas reflect the experiences of Desert Storm and Just Cause, more attention is given to deployment issues and less to protocol.*

U. S. Army War College. (1998a). Choices and challenges: A guide for the battalion commander's spouse. Carlisle Barracks, PA: Author. *Written by spouses from the Army War College resident class of 1991, this manual was designed to help battalion commanders' spouses adjust to their new roles and to help them direct or work with the unit's Family Support Group. It includes material on dining out, entertainment, coffee groups, New Year's Day receptions, and protocol.*

U. S. Army War College. (1998b). The spouse's battle book. Carlisle Barracks, PA: Author. *Spouses from the Army War College resident class of 1998 updated Choices and Challenges, providing considerably more detail in a much larger and more systematically organized volume.*

U. S. Army War College. (n.d.). It takes a team: A resource for the company commander's spouse/representative. Carlisle Barracks, PA: Author. *Prepared by spouses from the Army War College resident class of 1996, this manual was designed to help spouses of company commanders adjust to their new roles and to work with the unit's Family Support Group. Much of the material is similar to that in Choices and Challenges, but it has been adapted to the company level.*

E. Fort Bragg, North Carolina

Community Activities and Services Business Center
ATTN: AFZ-CAS-CF/Ms. Ellen Bowman
Fort Bragg, NC 28307-5000
(910)-396-8683/82 / DSN: 236-2473
Fax: (910) 396-5764
bowmane@bragg.army.mil

1. Training materials: None.

2. Resource materials:

Bowman, E. (1998). Family Support Group handbook. Fort Bragg, NC: Army Community Service. *This manual tells 18th Airborne Corps families what type of services they can get at Fort Bragg. Although highly specific to that post, it is available on a 3.5" floppy disc and therefore can be easily modified to fit the needs of others. This Handbook also has a good series of form letters to cover most of the expected needs for correspondence (pp. 51-59).*

F. III Corps and Fort Hood

ATTN: Ms. Kathleen Nase
76-1 Tank Battalion Avenue
Army Community Services, Building One
Fort Hood, TX 76544
(254) 287-3071 / DSN: 737-3071
Fax: (254)287-8428
nasek@hood-emh3.army.mil

1. Training materials: None.

2. Resource Materials:

III Corps and Fort Hood. (1998a). Family Support Group handbook. Fort Hood, TX: Author. *This manual helps family members at Fort Hood cope with deployments by explaining what deployments are and what the post does to help. It is an excellent example of an installation level handbook that is written in the style of an official Department of the Army Pamphlet.*

III Corps and Fort Hood. (1998b). Family support guide to deployment (III Corps and Fort Hood Pamphlet 608-3). Fort Hood, TX: Author.

Burk, S., & Peterson, P. (n.d.). Visual aids: A guide to effective presentations. Fort Hood, TX: Fort Hood Army Community Service.

Family Advocacy Program, Fort Hood. (1996). Mission readiness - A personal and family guide. Fort Hood, TX: Author. *This is another example of a deployment handbook for family members.*

G. 160th Special Operations Aviation Regiment (Airborne) [SOAR(A)]

ATTN: LTC Mark Jones
7277 Nightstalker Way
Fort Campbell, KY 42223
(270) 798-1710 / DSN: 635-1710
Fax: (270) 798-1645
jonesm@soar.army.mil

1. Training Materials: None.

2. Resource Materials:

Task Force 1-160th Special Operations Aviation Regiment (Airborne). (1998). Casualty notification guide. Fort Campbell, KY: Author. *This is the best guide on this subject that is presently available to FSGs.*

Task Force 1-160th SOAR(A). (n.d.). Family Support Group handbook. Fort Campbell, KY: Author. *This is another excellent example of a unit-based guide to family members for how to cope with deployments. It combines unit information with information about services that are available at Fort Campbell, KY.*

H. Other relevant sources and sites:

1. Standard Installation Topic Exchange Service (SITES). http://www.dmdc.osd.mil/sites/ *This website gives you information that will help you explore your current location and provides information about any other installation.*

2. U. S. Total Army Personnel Command. http://www-perscom.army.mil/default.htm *This website tells you about boards, promotions, and branch news.*

3. Military Spouse Net. http://www.spousenet.com/ *This website provides information that is of general interest to military spouses.*

4. The U. S. Army's "Homepage" on the World Wide Web. http://www.army.mil *This website allows you to move to any other Army-sponsored web page and, therefore, to the type of Army information you need.*

5. 2nd U. S. Army. (n.d.). Family readiness handbook. Fort Gillem, GA: Author. *This manual helps Reserve Component families understand what mobilization and deployments are about and how to cope with them.*

6. Educational Publication, Inc. (1993a). What's next? A guide to family readiness for the National Guard. Elkins, PA: Author. *This well organized and visually appealing manual has been widely used to help families prepare for mobilizations and deployments.*

7. Educational Publication, Inc. (1993b). What's next? A guide to family readiness for the U. S. Army. Elkins, PA: Author. *This well organized and visually appealing manual has been widely used to help families prepare for deployments.*

Appendix C: Ideas for Making Meetings and Social Events More Useful and Enjoyable

One of the key resources that people have today is time. For many, time is more valuable than money or many other things. Therefore, the key to making meeting and social events more useful and enjoyable is to maximize people's use of time. There are many ways to do that.

1. Whenever it is appropriate, make room for fun in the meeting. If people know they will get what they need from a meeting and enjoy themselves at the same time, they will feel that their time is being used twice as well.

2. Try to plan your meetings so they accomplish multiple objectives for the participants. Small things can make a big difference. Perhaps the commander of your next higher headquarters can stop by for a few minutes; perhaps the unit chaplain can tell a story with a good moral. Perhaps newcomers can be welcomed. Perhaps key volunteers can be recognized in front of the entire FSG. Some suggest that you can shorten the meetings and break the ice by having your announcements before the formal meeting begins (e.g., births, birthdays, promotions, and special recognition for those who are new or who are about to leave the unit).

3. Keep meetings flexible. You might have the first part for everyone, while the second part is only for those who wish to stay.

4. Provide a viable agenda; this helps keep meetings focused and productive.

5. Treat those who attend with the utmost respect – for example, in the way you show eye contact and respond to their questions, etc.

6. Let people know ahead of time what will happen at each meeting. This way they can determine for themselves whether the meeting is worth their time. You don't want people to show up, become disappointed, and drop out of the support system for all practical purposes. It also allows them to "de-conflict" their own schedules so they can attend the FSG meeting without having to miss something else important.

7. When volunteer responsibilities are spread among several people, involvement at FSG meetings is increased because the input of each of these individuals is needed to keep everyone up to date on what has been going on.

8. Quarterly potluck dinners are a good way to get spouses and single soldiers to participate in FSGs. They are low cost, allow people to socialize, and keep the meetings on a predictable schedule.

9. Using small door prizes for everyone or a more expensive door prize or two in an "opportunity event" lets people know their attendance is appreciated.[1] You can also provide additional "tickets" to any individual bringing a new member to the meeting.

10. Ideally, you want the meetings to provide something that cannot be provided by someone else, especially at less financial or time cost to FSG members. Guest speakers from the installation or the unit's higher headquarters are important because they provide unique contributions at low cost and they are more willing to spend their time with a larger group of families than for one-on-one consultations. Using videos from deployed units is another example of something unique that is low cost but might not be available to most spouses from any other source. Guest speakers who have been with the unit overseas are another excellent resource for meetings.

11. Just meeting with other families in the right context is a unique event. However, because many people find standing around talking to be of limited value (although it's fine and a good idea as part of a meeting because it facilitates the formation of personal ties), allowing them to interact through enjoyable activities is much better. For ideas, see Table 4 below and the pamphlet "'Icebreakers': Fun Ways to Incorporate Activities into Army Family Team Building Classes." For other good ideas, check your bookstore and Appendix B of this report for resources pertaining to meetings.

[1] Note that some states will only allow an organization to hold a raffle or other game of chance if the proceeds are going to benefit an organized charity. Some FSGs have gotten around this prohibition by modifying what they do and what they call the activity. However, we would urge you to check with your local Staff Judge Advocate (JAG) office before holding any fund-raising event that might appear to involve "gambling."

Table 4 **Activities for the Battalion** (some appropriate for FSG meetings)	
Athletic: • Roller-skating • Bowling • Miniature golf • Skiing • Swim/pool party • Coed sports activities • Family PT day • Fun runs and volksmarches	Seasonal: • Children's Christmas and Chanukah shopping (buy, wrap, & donate gifts to children's charity), Holiday parties • Thanksgiving or Christmas dinner in dining hall • Kris Kringle (boot outside barracks door) • Holiday goodies in day rooms • Jingle bell run (easy run with families, X-mas gear, & food) • Children's Easter egg hunt with single soldiers hiding eggs and judging contests
Food-centered: • Picnic • Potluck • Dinner at a restaurant • Trash/tacky party • Hobo party • Chili cook-off • Junk food party • Back from the field party • Ethnic dinners • Blue jeans brunch • Surprise brown bag lunches in battalion area[2] • Dining facility family nights • Decorate dining facility • Goodie bags for duty officer – delivered by commander • Dessert contest	Other: • Hail and farewells • Change of command ceremonies and parties • Free or reduced cost trips • Games/activities for children • Scavenger hunt • Favorite game night • Casino night • Video night • Road rally • Talent show, gong show • Newlywed game • Other TV game shows • Adopt a soldier (longer than just for a holiday) • Sew-ins (sew on patches)

[2] *The Spouse's Battle Book* (by the U. S. Army War College, 1998) describes a similar type of meeting where spouses donate drinks and snacks for soldiers engaged in routine training activities (range fire, PT tests, barracks pride day, motor stables, etc.) and then get the unit to deliver these items as a way of making these activities more pleasant for all.

Sample Ice Breakers for FSG meetings:

1. Have each person at your meeting share with the other participants their "answer" to one of the following incomplete sentences:

a. I see myself in 10 years doing.....
b. I choose friends who are.....
c. One place I have never been but would like to go is.....
d. If I had $2 million, I would.....
e. I met my spouse.....

2. Have people sort themselves by moving to the part of the room that represents something about themselves. Being "pre-sorted" will help them begin conversations with one another.

a. WORLD MAP: People get together according to previous military assignments.
b. STATE MAP: People get together according to the state where they grew up.
c. FAMILY SIZE: People get together according to the number of children they have in their current family.
d. SPORTS: People get together according to the sport they most like to watch or play.

3. BINGO. People are given the bingo card drawn below. They must meet people who have the characteristics listed in the boxes until they complete one row or column. Directions: "Find ONE person to sign each block. A person can sign your sheet only once. Keep filling blocks until you have BINGO." (Allow 15-20 minutes to complete.)

Likes to read	Same home state	Doesn't wear a watch	Same birth month	Likes to walk
Has most children	Same last assignment	Same eye color	Likes to bowl	Likes horses
Lives off post	New mother/father	FREE	Wearing black shoes	Same middle initial
Same age	Married same month	Expecting first child	Does not drive	Plays the piano
Likes to sew	Lives on post	Never lived in Germany	Has no children	Likes to ski

Fund-Raisers:

Fund-raisers are also a part of running an FSG. Be sure what you are proposing is legal, and always get your commander's permission before you hold one of the events listed below or any others you may want to try either within your unit or as part of a post-wide event. Each entry has "variations on the theme" and suggestions for how to make it more successful.

Table 5
Ideas for Fund-Raisers

Auctions:
- Boxed meals
- Commander's parking space
- Commander for the day
- Concealed package
- Services (yard work, meals, car wash)
- Silent (items have lists to sign with your offer)
- White elephant
- ❖ Note: days off and soldier passes cannot be auctioned

Bake Sales:
- Be predictable: same day, location, & time
- Get donations or have baking party
- Place: in company area, training sites, or central area (e.g., PX)
- Price: cheap, donations only
- Time: meal time, evening, and/or pay day

Fines:
- Missing buttons on uniforms
- Not wearing unit pin
- Not having unit coin

Booths:
- Locations: at post celebrations, sporting events, during fun runs or volksmarches
- Themes:
  - games (basketball, skilled throw, dunking)
  - food (popcorn, nachos, hot dogs, sandwiches)

Opportunity Drawings:
- Excursions, hotel packages
- Popular kid/baby items (individually or a basketful)
- Outdoor adventures
- Dinner with childcare

Services (Special & On-going):
- Car or dog washes
- Christmas wrapping and mailing service
- Used clothing stores, consignments
- Sale of unit cookbook

Other:
- Charge for unit talent show
- Have celebrity:
  - do something crazy if you reach your fund-raising goal
  - perform some service that is auctioned off
- Put piggy bank in company area to collect loose change
- Sponsor recycling effort
- Bingo or Bunko

Hints:
- ❖ Get FSG members to donate their talents/time (e.g., cooking, childcare)
- ❖ Keep tickets cheap
- ❖ Encourage multiple tickets (one for $1 / three for $2)
- ❖ Shift to fit occasion (kid items at kids events)
- ❖ Solicit items from local merchants

Additional Reading:

Additional ideas on how to make meetings and fund-raising activities more successful and enjoyable appear in the readings below. If your local Army Community Service does not have these reports, they can be obtained through the sources listed in Appendix B.

Bowman, E. (1999). Family Support Group readiness handbook. Fort Bragg, NC: Army Community Service. *(See the "Elements of a successful Family Support Group.")*

U. S. Army Community and Family Support Center. (1994e). Family Support Group: Advanced training Volume I (Operation READY). Alexandria, VA: Author. *(See the planning presentations section.)*

U. S. Army Community and Family Support Center. (1994f). Family Support Group: Advanced training Volume II (Operation READY). Alexandria, VA: Author. *(See the video discussion guide.)*

U. S. Army Community and Family Support Center. (1994g). Postdeployment: Homecoming and reunion (Operation READY). Alexandria, VA: Author. *(See the entire report.)*

U. S. Army Community and Family Support Center. (1994i). The Army family readiness handbook (Operation READY). Alexandria, VA: Author. *(See Chapter 4: Coping with separations and Chapter 5: Managing deployment and homecoming.)*

U. S. Army Community and Family Support Center. (n.d.). "Icebreakers": Fun ways to incorporate activities into Army family team building classes. Alexandria, VA: Author.

U. S. Army War College. (1998). Choices and challenges: A guide for the battalion commander's spouse. Carlisle Barracks, PA: Author. *(See Appendix K.)*

Appendix D: Unit Sponsorship Programs

The Army has three relocation programs: (1) the Army Community Service (ACS) relocation assistance, (2) ACS outreach programs, and (3) the unit's sponsorship program. Each of these programs has the same goal – to quickly link soldiers and families with the assistance they need to minimize the negative effects of multiple relocations. The ACS programs are designed to provide essential professional expertise to guide and educate soldiers and families on how to manage the complex process of moving. Unit sponsorship provides the "human touch" of welcome and settling-in assistance that is vital to newcomers in the community. It depends on the quality of genuine assistance offered after the soldier's or family's arrival. Its success depends on the availability of a pool of trained volunteers who have the time and incentives to actually "sponsor" (rather than just go through the motions).

The way new soldiers and families are treated by the unit and its families sends an important message to them about how important they really are to the success of the unit and its FSG. First impressions are hard to change. FSG members should work with the command group to ensure that new soldiers and their families are properly welcomed to the unit and the post. Helping soldiers and families settle in quickly is particularly important during major deployments because the needs of the mission make it difficult for newcomers to accomplish family tasks on their own. Also, the unfinished tasks and the fact that the soldier's family has not yet plugged into a support system weighs on the soldier's mind and makes him/her less effective on the job.

Below are some suggestions about how to help.

1. Include the FSG's own sponsorship letter in packets sent to incoming unit members. Topics that should be covered somewhere in the package (i.e., in the letter or accompanying pamphlets) include: housing, PX, commissary, medical support, local weather, schools, childcare, the post Child Development Center, maps of the post and the local community, local attractions, public transportation on and off post, and facts about the installation (e.g., its size, facilities, unique features, interesting facts, and overall mission). More importantly, talk about the unit – its mission, activities, and caring spirit. Be upbeat! Reassure them that they are joining a terrific organization. Let them know you are eager to meet them and to have them in the unit.

2. Willingly and happily participate in giving newcomers a first-rate welcome into the unit. Seek out new soldiers and their families; introduce yourself, talk with them, offer assistance. Meet one-on-one whenever possible. Enclose an FSG welcome letter in unit information folders. Enthusiastically describe and show pride in your unit. Promote a sense of family. Remind them how important they will be to the unit and how glad people are to have them there. Remember that newcomers have an important advantage over old-timers: they haven't gotten used to the way things are and may have good insights into problems that really should be fixed or resolved. Take advantage of their insights to bring problems and concerns to the attention of those who can help. Freely introduce newcomers around whenever there is an opportunity. When you visit them or

meet them for the first time at an FSG meeting, you may want to provide them with several items, if they have not already received them: a roster or telephone tree of the spouses in the unit, dates of the next FSG meeting/newcomers' briefing/other upcoming activities, a copy of the latest unit newsletter, a community or unit welcome packet, and a welcome plant or gift if customary.

3. Encourage everyone to take part in reaching out and supporting others. All unit members and spouses should be active in lending a hand even if they are not the official sponsor. Call to say hello; offer help with settling in. Have newcomers over to your residence. Show them around the post and local area. Invite and bring them to their first functions, including FSG meetings. Approach them at gatherings; don't force them to come to you. Assist them with meeting others. Check to make sure they are receiving unit information and know about upcoming events.

4. If you have time and wish to take it on, you may want to develop a newcomers' guide for the officers, senior NCOs, and their families. It would have an entry for each key leader and might include his/her photo, brief biographical sketch, hobbies, and interests. The idea is to help newcomers recognize faces and names more quickly.

Appendix E: How to Produce and Distribute Newsletters

The FSG newsletter represents an important component of the FSG's communication and outreach programs. Its tangible and intangible importance cannot be overemphasized. It helps to create family camaraderie, relay command information, reduce social isolation, convey the commander's concern for families, and provide information about what the unit (and FSG) is doing and why. It also helps families to cope successfully with military life by providing helpful hints and information about Army services that can be used for emergency and non-emergency situations.

Table 6
Items Suitable for a Newsletter[1]

1. Messages from the commander, sergeant major, or first sergeant.
2. Specific news about the command get-togethers, potlucks, video-tapings for deployed units, etc.
3. Information about helpful Army or community resources. This could be a short notice about changes in hours of operations for a popular service or a short article on what a less well known service is and how to access it.
4. Notes about unit members and families:
   - personal achievements (births, promotions, birthdays, anniversaries, and school accomplishments).
   - hail and farewells (including some background on who these people are and some kind words about them).
   - notes of appreciation about how volunteers are helping to keep the unit and FSG functioning.
5. If you have deployed units, you might want to include:
   - tips for handling common problems (e.g., what kind of help is available from the post auto craft shop to help with car problems).
   - helpful pamphlets (and/or agencies) that deal with adjustment problems frequently seen in children during long deployments.
   - questions from unit spouses and responses from experts on post.
6. A column on rumor control: what recent rumors say and what the facts are.
7. A listing of opportunities for volunteer service: who needs help, how to locate them, and what skills are required.
8. Periodically, you might want to list the names and telephone numbers of the most commonly used services on post to ensure that unit families will have that information when they need it.
9. If technology exists, including scanned pictures of unit events (e.g., an award or unit in the field) can be a nice addition.

[1] The inclusion of certain items may require that newsletter printing and distribution costs be paid from Non-Appropriated unit funds rather than Appropriated Funds, as explained later in this appendix.

There is no set format for a newsletter; however, the following guidelines may give you some ideas:

1. The letterhead should clearly state the complete title of the command, the date (including the year), and the fact that this is the FSG newsletter. In addition, there might be a popular title (e.g., THE LION'S ROAR).

2. The greeting and body of the newsletter may be in bulletin form or letter form with a generalized greeting (e.g., "Dear Lion family") or individually addressed to each member (if time and technology allow). The first paragraph can be an informal continuation of the greeting ("Hope this finds all of you well," etc.). To help the reader quickly locate what is relevant to him/her, the main part of the letter should be divided into clear sections. Each section can be titled with capitals and the key words underlined. Sample section headings might be: MESSAGE FROM THE COMMANDER, NEW COMMUNITY PROGRAMS, HINTS FOR SURVIVING DEPLOYMENTS, etc.

3. The closing might be a more personal, morale-lifting thought, or a brief statement about your role in the FSG, expressing that you and the FSG welcome contact with all members of the unit family.

4. The signature should include your title, address, phone number, and designated phone hours for routine calls (if you are offering this service). Signing the letter in script is a nice touch and adds to its impact.

5. The letter should be typed, proofread for both typing and grammar, and signed by the commander (or his/her designated representative), indicating that the letter is official (particularly if Appropriated Funds are paying for its production and/or distribution).

The length and frequency of publications is up to the FSG. A monthly newsletter seems to help maintain a sense of contact with the command and to keep the information current. One or two single spaced pages is common, although up to 16 pages is allowed. To reduce costs, the originals are often typed on 8.5 by 14 inch paper and then shrunk to standard (8.5 by 11 inch) size. Note that if the letter is to be stapled and mailed without an envelope, you must reserve the last half of the last page for the address.

The Army rules regarding who pays for printing and postage for the newsletter state that if the information helps improve family readiness, educates families to be more self-reliant, promotes unit cohesion, or helps strengthen the esprit among family members, it can and should be paid for by the unit (i.e., Appropriated Funds). If unofficial information is included (e.g., births and recipes), it can be paid for by the government via Non-Appropriated Funds (NAF). However, it cannot include commercial information (e.g., an advertisement for the insurance business of one of the unit spouses). Likewise, it cannot contain information that violates Army security (if you have questions, ask before you print it).

If your installation gives you a choice about how the FSG newsletter is distributed, keep the following facts in mind. Bulk mail is less expensive; however, first-class mail allows you to spot when a family member has moved. This information can be quite helpful in trying to keep the family informed about the unit, notified if there is an emergency, or helped in a variety of other ways. Hand-delivering the newsletter, on the other hand, provides not only a human touch but also a chance to relate to the family in a way that can only be done face-to-face.

In the end, the keys to a successful newsletter are the motivation and abilities of the individuals who put it together. They must define the audience, decide on purpose and format for the newsletter, write the newsletter, keep its mailing list current, plan for distribution, and evaluate the effort.

Here is a quick checklist to help with the evaluation.

Can you answer YES to these questions?
1. Is your letter clear and easy to read?
2. If you want the reader to do something, is it clear what you want, how it benefits the reader to do it, and why s/he should be interested in that?
3. Is your tone courteous and friendly?
4. Is the message well edited (well organized, clear, and concise)?
5. Do you demonstrate a genuine desire to be helpful?
6. Is the newsletter visually appealing (good layout, variety of fonts, good use of white space)?

Can you answer NO to these questions?
1. Do you overly reflect your personal interests through the frequent use of "I," "we," "us," and "our"?
2. Does your letter contain unnecessary words?
3. Is the tone negative or "too official" (e.g., it looks like a form letter)?
4. Is your writing ambiguous or vague?
5. Does your letter contain trite or outmoded expressions (e.g., contents duly noted, kindly be advised, and pursuant to yours of recent date)?

Many Army installations have begun to furnish FSGs with the resources they need to carry on the business of being an FSG. These include meeting rooms, computer programs, and other office equipment needed to get out the newsletters and other FSG publications. If your post has such facilities, use them. If it does not, lobby to get them.

Additional Reading:

Additional hints about how to produce a newsletter can be found in the following sources that are described in Appendix B.

III Corps and Fort Hood. (1998). Family Support Group handbook. Fort Hood, TX: Author. *(See Appendix H: Guidelines for FSG newsletter.)*

III Corps and Fort Hood. (1997). Memorandum of instruction for dissemination of FSG newsletters. Fort Hood, TX: Army Community Service.

22nd U. S. Army Support Group. (n.d.). Family Support Group booklet. Vicenza, Italy: Author. *(See the newsletter section.)*

Bowman, E. (1998). Family Support Group handbook. Fort Bragg, NC: Army Community Service. *(See Chapter 4: Formats for newsletter operations and the Appendix on newsletter production.)*

Appendix F: Coping with Trauma

In the family life of a unit, death and tragedy are expected events. The Army has a well-developed system for handling trauma when it involves the death of a soldier. The casualty notification team may not require any FSG assistance; however, FSGs need to be prepared in case they are called. In the more likely scenario, FSGs respond to the death of a soldier's spouse, child, or close relative. Other tragedies to which FSGs may respond include miscarriages and divorces.

We all recognize the pain, and we want to do something, but we are often ill equipped to help. What should we do and say in these circumstances? If at all possible, the FSG should arrange to have members trained in how to conduct crisis interventions and help others to deal with grief. At a minimum, here are some general rules for any kind of crisis intervention:

Table 7
Guidelines for Crisis Intervention

1. LISTEN – let the people involved speak. Try to truly listen to those involved. Be sure you hear what they think the problem is and what they expect from you. Repeat back to the person in crisis what you believe s/he said. Be descriptive, not judgmental.
2. Remember that the person who has sought your help is your focus. Even if the person is busy with someone else, keep yourself available to work with that person when s/he becomes available.
3. You are a listener, a referral agent, and perhaps a friend. You can help people by listening, offering suggestions only when the individual cannot think of alternatives. Do not give advice or assume responsibility for the person's problems or life. The goal of crisis intervention is to allow the persons involved to become responsible for themselves and aware of the consequences of their actions. Work toward clarification of the situation.
4. Don't be over-active. The natural tendency is to talk a lot and offer a good deal of help in the form of advice or solutions. Let the person in crisis take the lead. That is what the individual needs – to talk the problem out.
5. Be empathetic and identify the feelings. Is the person depressed, frustrated, or angry? Encourage the person to talk on an emotional level.
6. Try not to become absorbed with historical excuses or reasons for present problems. Focus on what is happening now to maintain the situation, and permit the person to explore what could be done to change it.
7. When dealing with family crises, give equal attention to all family members, whether they are adults or children.
8. When referring, be specific. Tell them where to go, when to be there, and who to see. If possible, provide the name and phone number of the person in the agency who you know will offer assistance and services. The FSG member will feel better about being referred for help if you offer to take them to their first appointment and/or offer to get them an alternative source of help if the first one does not work out. Services also tend to work out better if you arrange to follow up with the person you are assisting and the person who rendered the service, to see how each party felt about the first appointment.

Table continues

Table 7 continued
9. Do not call others (police, hospitals, rescue squad, military police, parents) without the permission of the person you are seeing unless a suicidal or homicidal act is imminent. 10. Provide reassurance that the person will be able to resolve the problem. However, do not promise that "everything will be all right" or "he or she will be fine, you'll see." That gives false hope, and you cannot deliver on such a promise. 11. The individual's trust in you must be developed and maintained. This trust is earned by acting responsibly and protecting confidentiality.

The extent to which a given FSG member gets involved with a family in crisis depends on a number of factors. What was your relationship to the family before the crisis began? The closer the prior relationship, the more likely they are to turn to you for help. What does the family want? Some families want to be surrounded by people; others want to go it alone (or with a few close friends). You don't have to guess what to do. Take your cue from a mutual friend, their best friend, or someone who is experienced in this area (e.g., a counselor or chaplain). You also need to listen to yourself: what do you feel comfortable doing in this situation? You are more likely to be successful in helping families if you do what you feel led to do rather than what you imagine ought to be done.

Here are some practical suggestions for how to show that you care:

Table 8 Grieving Families: Suggestions for Showing You Care	
• Attend a service for this individual/family • Give a plant, fruit basket, or flowers • Send a note, card, book, or poem • Call • Provide meals • House-sit during the funeral • Provide names of those who have had similar losses[1] • Drive or pick up family members	• Offer to run errands • Take care of children • Offer to help with housework, lawn care, or other chores • Help with moving if necessary • Help the bereaved family handle thank-you notes to those who brought food, etc. (e.g., furnish needed names and addresses or, if needed, actually write the letters for the bereaved to sign.)

If the family is staying in the area, you may want to consider doing the following some weeks after the crisis first appeared:

- Encourage FSG members to keep in contact with them
- Call periodically
- Invite them to dinner.

[1] Of course, you would need permission to release the names of the "individuals who had similar losses." Also, you would only encourage these individuals to get together if you believed the resulting relationship would likely be beneficial to all concerned.

You need to consider the ramifications of having the crisis family remain in the FSG. This can be a delicate and highly charged situation for both the family members and the remaining FSG members. Think through what may be appropriate and how you can handle that family and the others. The unit FSG will grow as it sees itself successfully handling difficult situations. For example, families in crisis often lash out at those who are trying to help (e.g., complaining that you are doing too little, too much, or the wrong things). Knowing that FSG work is not always a bed of roses should encourage you and your fellow FSG leaders to build skills, relationships, and plans for expected contingencies. Take any courses or workshops that you can on crisis intervention, grieving, or trauma. These courses are offered in a variety of venues; ask around.

Additional Reading:

Task Force 1-160th Special Operations Aviation Regiment (Airborne). (1998). Casualty notification guide. Fort Campbell, KY: Author.

U. S. Army War College. (1998). Choices and challenges: A guide for the battalion commander's spouse. Carlisle Barracks, PA: Author. *(See Chapter 9.)*

U. S. Army War College. (n.d.). It takes a team: A resource for the company commander's spouse/representative. Carlisle Barracks, PA: Author. *(See Chapter 11.)*

Appendix G: How to Start or Re-energize an FSG

One of the key factors in recruiting and keeping good volunteers is to not only listen to what they want to do for the group but also be able to describe accurately what jobs need to be filled. Here is an example of what a job description looks like:

Table 9
Volunteer Job Description (Sample)

1. Job title: (What do you call this job?)
2. Objective: (Why is the job necessary? What do you hope to accomplish?)
3. Responsibilities: (What can the volunteer expect to do? List some specific tasks or areas of responsibility.)
4. Time required: (Honestly state the actual time commitment that is needed.)
5. Qualifications: (What kind of person do you need to fill the job? Are specific skills, interests, or education required?)
6. Training: (What kinds of training can the volunteer expect to receive?)
7. Evaluation: (Who is responsible? When is it done? Does the volunteer have a chance to evaluate the experience and training?)

The documents listed in the "Additional Reading" section at the end of this appendix contain job descriptions for several of the FSG jobs named in Table 10. You are certainly free to use them, as they are. However, you may need to combine jobs if you have a smaller unit or fewer volunteers.

Table 10
Possible Volunteer FSG Jobs[1]

- Coordinator/manager
- Battalion FSG chairperson
- Company FSG chairperson
- Platoon key person
- Contact person
- Support circle leader (company level)
- Editor:
  - Company FSG newsletter
  - Battalion FSG newsletter
- FSG publicity chairperson (battalion level)
- Hospitality coordinator
- Fund-raising key person (battalion level)
- Activity coordinator
- Welcome/hospitality chairperson(s)

[1] Sample job descriptions for most of these positions appear on pages 81-95 of the U. S. Army Community and Family Support Center's manual: The Army Family Readiness Handbook, Operation READY (1994i).

Why People Volunteer

People volunteer their time and abilities for many reasons. Most people say the personal satisfaction of helping people is the main reason. Volunteers also enjoy being exposed to new activities and experiences; volunteering allows them to remain active and further develop their talents and skills. For many people, voluntary experience can be translated into additional credentials. Volunteers often can use this experience to their advantage in the future on resumes and job applications.

For military family members, volunteering is often an ideal way to gain experience. Volunteer work may allow parents with child-rearing responsibilities to enter the job market at a higher level once the children are gone. Volunteer work sometimes turns into paying jobs.

Here are some low-cost suggestions on how to acknowledge volunteers.

Table 11
101 Ways to Give Recognition to Volunteers

1. Smile	24. Greet by name
2. Put up a volunteer suggestion box	25. Provide good pre-service training
3. Treat to a soda	26. Help develop self-confidence
4. Reimburse assignment-related expenses	27. Award plaques to sponsoring groups
5. Ask for a report	28. Take time to explain
6. Send a birthday card	29. Be verbal
7. Arrange for discounts	30. Motivate agency VIPs to converse with them
8. Give service stripes	31. Hold rap sessions
9. Maintain a coffee bar	32. Give additional responsibility
10. Plan annual ceremonial occasions	33. Invite participation in team planning
11. Invite to staff meetings	34. Respect sensitivities
12. Recognize personal needs and problems	35. Enable to grow on the job
13. Accommodate personal needs and problems	36. Enable to grow out of the job
14. Be pleasant	37. Send newsworthy information to the media
15. Ask them to help with an emergency in the FSG	38. Have wine and cheese tasting parties
16. Provide childcare	39. Ask client/patient to evaluate their work/service
17. Post Honor Roll in reception area	40. Say "Good Afternoon"
18. Respect their wishes	41. Honor their preferences
19. Give informal teas	42. Create pleasant surroundings
20. Keep challenging them	43. Welcome to staff coffee breaks
21. Send a Thanksgiving Day card to the volunteer's family	44. Enlist to train others
22. Provide a nursery	45. Have a public reception
23. Say "Good Morning"	46. Take time to talk

Table continues

Table 11 continued	
47. Defend against hostile or negative staff	75. Maintain meaningful file
48. Make good plans	76. Send impromptu fun cards
49. Commend to supervisory staff	77. Plan occasional extravaganzas
50. Send a Valentine	78. Instigate client-planned surprises
51. Make thorough pre-arrangements	79. Utilize purchased newspaper space
52. Persuade "personnel" to equate volunteer experience with work experience	80. Promote a "Volunteer-of-the-Month" program
53. Admit to partnership with paid staff	81. Send letter of appreciation to employer
54. Recommend to prospective employer	82. Plan a "Recognition Edition" of the agency newsletter
55. Provide scholarships to attend volunteer conferences or workshops	83. Color code name tags to indicate particular achievements (hours, years, unit, etc.)
56. Offer advocacy roles	84. Send commendatory letters to prominent public figures
57. Utilize as consultants	85. Say "We missed you"
58. Write them thank-you notes	86. Praise the sponsoring group or club
59. Invite participation in policy formulation	87. Promote staff smiles
60. Surprise with coffee and cake	88. Facilitate personal development
61. Celebrate outstanding projects and achievements	89. Distinguish between groups and individuals in the group
62. Nominate for volunteer awards	90. Maintain safe working conditions
63. Have a "Presidents Day" for presidents of sponsoring groups	91. Adequately orient to job
64. Carefully match volunteer with job	92. Award special citations for extraordinary achievements
65. Praise the volunteers to their friends	93. Fully indoctrinate regarding the agency
66. Provide substantive in-service training	94. Send Christmas or Chanukah cards
67. Provide useful tools in good working condition	95. Be familiar with the details of assignments
68. Say "Good Night"	96. Conduct community-wide, cooperative, inter-agency recognition events
69. Plan staff and volunteer social events	97. Plan a theater party
70. Be a *real* person	98. Attend a sports event
71. Rent billboard space for public appreciation	99. Have a picnic
72. Accept their individuality	100. Say "Thank You"
73. Provide opportunities for conferences and evaluation	101. Smile
74. Identify age groups	

Additional Reading:

Bowman, E. (1999). Family Support Group readiness handbook. Fort Bragg, NC: Army Community Service.

U. S. Army Community and Family Support Center. (1994i). The Army family readiness handbook, Operation READY. Alexandria, VA: Author.

Appendix H: Acronyms Used in This Handbook

ACS = Army Community Service
ADCO = Alcohol and Drug Control Office
AER = Army Emergency Relief
AF = Appropriated Funds
AFTB = Army Family Team Building
AMOPES = Army Mobilization and Operations Planning and Execution System
AR = Army Regulation
ARI = U. S. Army Research Institute for the Behavioral and Social Sciences
AWC = Army War College
CAFAP = Consumer Affairs & Financial Assistance Program
CDS = Child Development Services
COL = Colonel
CPO = Civilian Personnel Office
DA = Department of the Army
DoD = Department of Defense
EFMP = Exceptional Family Member Program
FAC = Family Assistance Center
FAP = Family Advocacy Program
FM = Army Field Manual
FMEAP = Family Member Employment Assistance Program
FORSCOM = U. S. Army Forces Command
FSG = Family Support Group
JAG = Judge Advocate General Office
LES = Leave and Earning Statement
NAF = Non-Appropriated Funds
NCO = Non-Commissioned Officer
PCS = Permanent Change of Station
POC = Point of Contact
PT = Physical Training
PX = Post Exchange (U. S. Army base retail store)
RAP = Relocation Assistance Program
RD = Rear Detachment
SITES = Standard Installation Topic Exchange Service
TLS-TF = Training, Leadership, and Soldier Task Force
USACFSC = U. S. Army Community and Family Support Center
USAREUR = U. S. Army Europe
WRAIR = Walter Reed Army Institute of Research

Appendix I: Index of Key Words and Phrases

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This report helps Army Family Support Group (FSG) leaders – particularly in rapid deployment units – start and operate FSGs, by providing them the best information from Army research, family support professionals, and experienced FSG leaders. Although expert judgment has been exercised in the selection and presentation of available materials, the ideas here are only suggested courses of action. Individual FSGs are quite different from one another, and most of these ideas have not been subjected to rigorous evaluations. The topics covered include (1) what FSGs are expected to accomplish, (2) suggestions for starting (or re-energizing) an FSG, (3) relevant Army Regulations, and (4) sources of additional help in operating the FSG or for assisting FSG members.

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